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FOLKS**

by
**FRANCIS
CECIL
WHITE-
HOUSE**

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*A
Story
of the
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A STORY OF THE CANADIAN PRAIRIES

By FRANCIS CECIL WHITEHOUSE

The Thunder Bird



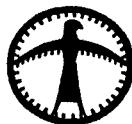
A Mark of Canadian Quality

PLAIN FOLKS

A Story of the Canadian Prairies

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FRANCIS CECIL WHITEHOUSE



OTTAWA

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INTRODUCTION

Sometimes novels are written on the strength of a "scraped-up acquaintance" with a Country—a hasty trip through with only brief intervals outside of railway trains to gather data. For these it may be said, possibly, that they picture a momentary image—a "flash in the pan" inspiration—to the author of new scenes, new peoples and new thoughts. This western Canadian story was not written in that way. So far from it being a hasty impression, I spent sixteen years of my life in the Prairie Provinces, and two years in British Columbia to think it over and to get the perspective I desired before putting pen to paper.

In those sixteen years—almost entirely in small towns and villages—I lived the life of the people; participating with them in their ambitions, labours and pleasures; and sharing with them their griefs. I have baked with the glass reading 110° in the shade in Manitoba; suffered 52° below zero for weeks at a time in Saskatchewan; yes, and seen cattle frozen stiff, and still standing, in snow drifts in Alberta. No! whatever the faults of the yarn may be, the slur of "too hasty" cannot be laid against it.

I wrote the prelude in January, 1923, and in this I alluded to the somewhat Sahara-like "dryness" of the Prairies. I have now written "finis" in July, 1924—a brief eighteen months later—with the knowledge that all three Provinces have rescinded their laws aiming at total prohibition, and put new ones on the statutes providing for "moderation" under Government control. I might, in order to give no false or misleading impression, eliminate the erring words in the prelude, or, this other course is open to me, of giving an explanation in this place. I seize upon the latter unhesitatingly, because it instances better than any words might do the hasty and unconsidered legislation of western Canada. Waves of sentiment for this and that sweep over the land from time to time like breeze billows through a field of grain and all too often, and heedless of consequences, the unripe idea of the moment becomes law.

With regard to length, I have been torn between the conflicting advice of a successful author who advocates: "bulk!—give them bulk" and the oft-recurring comments of reviewers: "not a bad story, but too drawn out!". My aim—playing both ends against the middle—has been somewhere 'twixt and between; and, I hope, well this side of boredom. For, short or long, it seems to me that the excuse for any book, first, last and always, is to entertain the reader. If my yarn succeeds in this, and at the same time portrays fairly and understandingly the rural life on the Canadian Prairies in the good old days, then, indeed, I am content.

I shall be scored—Oh! I know it well!—for serving oysters in a month that lacks the qualifying "r". But, after all, what difference does it make? As poor Mrs. Passman herself admitted: they might just as well have been pan-cakes.

There! it is finished! Life is too short for polishing; and it must run as it reads: words in combination, good, bad and indifferent. For, as we used to say in the old cattle days in south Alberta: "There she is, hair and all, and the tail goes with the hide!".

THE AUTHOR.



*The story of an Agricultural Country
is the story of its small towns : : :*

*To these, and to all those who dwell
therein, this book is humbly dedicated.*

—THE AUTHOR

What's in a Name?



The officials of a Canadian Railway Company were in session and matters of varied nature and importance had received their usual care. "Now," said the Big Man who ruled the Company's destinies, "the house will go into committee on naming cities for posterity."

While the remark was intended jocularly—and was, of course, received by the Big Man's subordinates with suitable appreciation—the christening referred to was, in point of fact, actually overdue. To be more explicit, the time had come when four or five hundred more miles of newly built railway must pass from the construction stage to the utilitarian. Too hastily it must not be assumed that the construction period is necessarily barren of reward. On the contrary, if the Government guarantee per mile be only large enough, and the construction cost only small enough, a residue remains to the enterprising builder of railways. But all good things come to an end; and the construction vine, having yielded its first fruits, melons, plums, and what not, must now, by careful husbandry, be coaxed to produce a second growth in the form of juicy townsites. The dual crop, to confine the metaphor to terms of agriculture, is solely a matter of water and "fertilizer".

So, at the Big Man's orders, plans were produced and spread out on the long table; and the naming of "cities to be" received the officials' undivided attention.

"Let me see," said the Big Man, "where did we leave off?"

"Mile 180, Sir," a secretary reminded him.

"Ah! correct, Williams, of infallible memory. Now then, mile 189—town or village?"

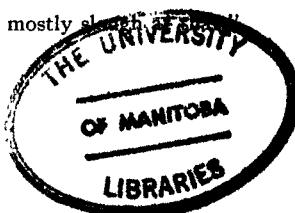
"Village," an engineer replied, "and mostly s—"

"Name then, anybody?"

"Nebe," the engineer suggested.

"Meaning?"

"Indian for water, Sir."



"Excellent!" approved the Big Man, "but don't work the Indian names to death. We were going them strong when we last adjourned."

"Mile 198, now—name for this embryo metropolis?"

"Greenock," somebody murmured.

"More Scotchmen around!" the Big Man commented, "and a less attractive place I never saw. But let it go."

"Next—a village, a name, gentlemen?"

"Kirkcudbright."

The Big Man raised his hands deprecatingly. "Oh, give it a bone! We're naming Canadian townsites, boys, not Scotch whiskys."

"Bear's Paw, then."

"But why the devil 'Bear's Paw', Thompson?" the Chair asked.

"And why the devil not?" Thompson countered. "Isn't there a Moose Jaw, and an Elkhorn, and a"

"Objection over-ruled," assented his chief, laughing. "Bear's Paw gets it."

So the merry game continued: a Welsh town of difficult pronunciation—a Superintendent's aunt, it appeared, had died there; Indian names; proper names of Railway chiefs; banking magnates; and beasts of the field: anything and anybody—a heterogeneous mess. Finally, the Big Man looked at his watch "One more now, a town. Wanted—a name for this desirable townsite. What suggestions, Gentlemen?"

Silence.

"Come!" chided the Chair, "have you no resourcefulness among you?"

The irascible Thompson replied: "Look here, Chief, why set on us? Ye don't know how difficult it is. The Royal Family's all gone, with the Reginas, Victorias, Prince Alberts, Prince Georges and the like. The stock of Bank Presidents' run low. Ye object to the Scotch names; and the menagerie's exhausted. Why don't ye name the damned place yerself?"

"There, there, Thompson," his Chief gently reproved, "I'm afraid the strain has been too much for you." Then he turned to the engineer, McDonald. "Say, Mac, when you put the line through mile 423, did you notice anything *particular*?"

McDonald thought for a minute, and grinned: "Only gophers," he replied.

"Then," the Big Man announced, "I'll call it 'Gopherburg'. And now, gentlemen," said he, transferring a cigar stub from the

right to left side of his mouth with an adroit movement of the tongue, "I think I'll go to lunch."

* * * * *

When lunch calls, much can be forgiven in the way of hasty christenings, but "Gopherburg"! Oh! the injustice of it!

For the benefit of the uninformed, let us refer to the Encyclopædia Britannica. We find "GOPHER, (reptile, small tortoise)." We are on a false trail. So, once more, "GOPHER, (mammal), see Souslik, destructive, burrowing rodent; lives in dry, treeless plains, especially on sandy soil". Now the district surrounding Mile 423 had, and still has, the richest and deepest black loam in Western Canada; further, the rolling land is prettily treed with aspen and balsam poplar, birch; and more northerly, with spruce. How came it, then, that McDonald, who knew the prairie provinces from Rat Portage to Peace River should, when he closed his eyes to consider the matter, see only gophers and so declare himself? Thereby hangs a tale.

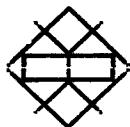
The fawn gopher is in size, colour, and when standing on its hind legs (its favourite position) of appearance, precisely similar to a wooden survey peg. For twenty years the bronzed old engineer had suffered from "gopheritis"—which consists of a most vexing confusion between live gophers and dead pegs; and is (incidentally) productive of much strong language. He hated gophers; he dreamed of gophers and, if he closed his eyes for a moment, he saw gophers. So it came about that a Big Man's hunger and an engineer's mania, were responsible for the libel; and Mile 423 remains "Gopherburg" even unto this day.

But, if Mile 423 became "Gopherburg", the unhappy incident had no evil effects. Blue-prints and fertile-brained townsite salesmen did their work efficiently. The lots sold like hot cakes. The usual mushroom growth of frame buildings sprang into being; stores, hotels, churches, a bank, livery stables and residences. Gopherburg, from a hamlet became a village, and from a village, a town, with a Mayor and council all complete. Nor, in this particular case, were the townsite blue-prints productive of a similar colouration on the part of purchasers. Gopherburg prospered because the district surrounding it prospered; and at the time of our story numbered some 750 of population.

But our "period" is of "once upon a time" when a man could raise a thirst; before war changed all our lives; before

moral reformers banished alcoholic beverages and eliminated resultant crime; before automobiles had ceased to frighten horses.

The stage is set! Let us then hasten with the written word before vision dims and memory rusts with the passing years.



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PLAIN FOLKS

A Story of the Canadian Prairies

CHAPTER I.

AN ARRIVAL

GOPHERBURG was on its toes. The bank manager of the past two years was leaving to take charge of a branch elsewhere and the new man was expected to-day. Little enough to excite the towns-folk? Oh dear no! not in Gopherburg. The arrival of the tri-weekly train was in itself something—something, that is to say, to provide evening entertainment to the idle and curious. But, with a new bank manager aboard, this particular westbound was an event.

It was 6:50 o'clock, and the depot was crowded with little groups of men and women; so much so, that Archie Stevens, the fat, jovial Agent, could proceed with his express truck only with difficulty, and considerable jollying from the expectant groups.

Men, of course, are not curious, so with regard to the male population present it is only necessary to state that they had come down for a stroll, or to smoke a pipe, or to see Archie about some freight. But for the Ladies? Was good enough reason lack-

ing or an alibi really necessary? Be assured, the departing manager had been judiciously pumped. Monty Jack, the flour and feed merchant, had asked the leading questions essential on such occasions. What was his name? Was he married? About what age would he be? Tall or the contrary? Good looking? And, since all Gopherburg knew the answers within the hour, there is nothing to conceal from the reader. "Mr. Long." "He's not married." "About thirty." "Five feet eleven, I should judge." "Yes." "And please tell your wife that I give her the information with pleasure, and thank her for me for taking the youngsters off our hands while we were packing."

Now is it to be wondered at why the ladies were there in their war paint? As Sally Jack said, as she burst upon her boon companions, Mrs. Benson and Mrs. Quigley, "Think of it! A new man, young, good looking—and unmarried. O girls!" "Cap" Marsden always gallantly referred to this trio as the "Three Graces"—but of them and him, more anon.

The westbound whistled at the crossing, swung round the bend into view and pulled up skilfully with her express car alongside Archie's truck. From the tail-end, Mr. Long (and according to specifications) duly made his appearance. He had wondered more than once during the day if he would, in fact, arrive. For the line, even at this stage of its history, was ballasted most indifferently—willow brush, for instance, is scarcely first-class ballast—and in places the engineer and fireman had stood on the bottom step of their cab ready to jump. However, here he was. He worked his way through the throng, looking around as if expecting something. Then he saw

it, and smiled. It was a dirty face, badly in need of a shave, but upon its head the sought-for emblem of office—a peaked cap bearing the words "KING EDWARD". To this one he handed his kit-bag and two trunk checks and left the depot without more ado.

Speedy as his arrival and exit had been, he had not escaped the eyes of one who had made it her particular business to arrive at the psychological moment—ostensibly to mail a letter at the train. It was Sybil Thurston and she had driven her father's car to the depot and alighted just as the train itself came to a halt, with the result that the new-comer passed right before her. Then she slipped across the platform and handed her letter to the mail clerk. Twenty seconds later she was back in her car.

We will not pursue the stranger into the dining room, for the waitress's "cold beef, cold pork, Shepherd's pie" offers only monotony, and little of entertainment. We will, however, follow him into his bedroom, where, after a brisk walk beyond the outskirts and back again, he finally betook himself.

Mr. Long entered, closed the door and, raising his head, sniffed the tainted breeze like the stag of historic memory. One sniff was enough—a faint smell of musk. Mr. Long's subsequent actions were the outcome of bitter experience with country hotels in western Canada. He pulled the bed a foot or so from the wall, and moved the table with lighted lamp alongside. He stole out into the passage and selected from a shelf of lamps one well supplied with oil. This he brought in and placed on the other end of the table and lighted. He stripped the upper sheet, blanket and counterpane from the bed and threw them in a heap on the floor and, by way of over-

weight, chucked the pillows after them. Next he placed his kit-bag on the table between the lamps, took out two clean shirts to serve as a pillow and proceeded to undress down to his under-clothing. He opened the window top and bottom and pinned the blind securely to the casement. Over the said underclothing he put on a pair of pajamas and his overcoat. The things removed he placed in the kit bag. He lay down on the bed. He was going to read? Wrong. Mr. Long was preparing for sleep.

In books of African adventure, it has been told over and over again how the hero and his party at night built a *zareba* to ward against lions—burning piles of brush, into the flare of which even the hungriest lion dare not intrude. That is what Mr. Long was doing—the lions of the “King Edward” being what is scientifically known as *Cimex lectularius*.

Cimex lectularius is an insect. In shape and size it is very like a parsnip seed, and, encouraged in vice by mankind’s dirty habitations, it has become a degenerate little creature. It has lost its wings; lost its self-respect; and lost our respect. It has retained its odour—of musk. It has acquired a voracious appetite. But it is not *too* formidable if you know how. James Long knew how.

Gopherburg’s bank-manager-to-be rose at seven o’clock, dressed, removed all traces of the *zareba* and went downstairs carrying his kit-bag. Here he encountered Ben Pengelly, the proprietor of the “King Edward”, who asked him how he had slept? “Excellent,” replied his guest, truthfully enough, and smiled as he sat down to breakfast.

Now a green hand at the game would have suffered most vexatiously throughout the night; would have

pinned the offenders all over the white counterpane; and would have said hasty things to the "King Edward's" overlord and, as a result of his ignorance and resentment, lost the goodwill of an influential man. All a matter of experience.

He was at the bank just before 9 o'clock, and, at the request of his predecessor, who was fidgeting to get away, undertook to take over the branch by six. This was no mean feat, for the cash must be counted, the securities checked, the books balanced and all the rest of the rag-tag-and-bob-tail which makes up a bank's stock in trade, certified correct. At lunch hour, he might have been seen feeding himself with sandwiches with one hand and checking vigorously with the other. But he did it.

In the interim, he also arranged regarding the purchase of the other man's house, and acquired such effects as would enable him to move in that evening. With a woman, shopping is a pleasurable thing—something to thrill and dally over—even if it be only a Spring hat, and she knows exactly the shade and shape to suit her, yes, and has it, as a matter of fact, already spotted. A man works differently. The subtle distinction between a towel, say, of hem-stitched linen and machine-stitched cotton is, to him, no valid reason for pawing the articles with the fingers or licking them with the tip of the tongue. Nor, in the small purchase of a combination bed-davenport and two armchairs to match, is it a matter of moment whether the covering stuff is figured tapestry or green rep. He tries them out, quickly and satisfactorily, by stretching his length on the one and sitting down in the others. If they fit him, he

says: "Yes, I'll take those," and passes on to the burning question of cooking utensils.

The forty minutes or so that James Long spent that day in furnishing his house was probably the most popular forty minutes of his life. He met, in quick succession, Cole Benson, the general-store keeper; "Squirrel" Munroe, the house furnishings man; Will Bridget, the hardware merchant, et al, and was voted, by each and every one of them, an instantaneous success. Cole Benson put the thing in words that evening at the supper table. "Peg, my dear, the new one's some lad. Knew what he wanted, and bought it. No chewing the rag. A pleasant feller to meet. And, say, if I was a woman, he'd look good to me."

At which Peg Benson turned her dark, lustrous eyes husbandwise—and smiled to herself. Not for nothing did she qualify for "Cap" Marsden's "Three Graces" at thirty-five. Cole looked fifty, and was inclined to portliness, but they understood one another perfectly.

Of course, the crowd saw Mr. and Mrs. Short and family off on the eastbound with full Gopherburg honours. They had been well enough liked, and had done their duty to the community according to their lights. What can man or woman do more? So there was cheering and hand shaking, and enough candy for the youngsters to make them sick all the way to their next home-town, if their mother did not stop them, which, being a sensible woman, she certainly would. And everybody said kind things and the train pulled out.

The first prize for witticism on the occasion was unanimously accorded to Frank Lewis. Clearing his

throat, and generally attracting attention to himself as only a small, fat man can, he announced in his best auctioneering voice: "Bankers come! and Bankers go! And that's the Long and Short of it!"

So, in twenty-four hours, the whole matter had been accomplished. The old manager had gone to parts unknown—probably never to be seen again. And the new man reigned in his stead.

CHAPTER II.

BUSINESS—

LONG had passed his second night in Gopherburg under his own roof. He had again slept "excellently", but without such artificial aids as *zarebas*. He had risen, breakfasted and gone over to the bank feeling "merry and bright". March was drawing to a close and the spring in north Saskatchewan is exhilarating to the heart of man.

The first hour in a bank is a busy one, but now, at 10 o'clock, the check of yesterday's entries being completed, Long was sitting in his room running through the mail. A caller presented himself.

"Good day."

"Good day," responded the manager and indicated a chair near his desk.

"You're the new manager?"

"Yes—name's Long."

The visitor, a tall, well-built man, turned his hat nervously in his hands. "Any chance," he asked, "to get thirty dollars?"

"Ever borrowed here before?"

"No."

The manager opened a drawer in his desk and drew out a farmer's statement blank, and, doing so, took a hasty appraisement of the applicant, the deductions being: honest, obstinate, nervous, worried

and hard-up. He picked up a pen and his voice was kindly: "Your name, please?"

"William Bradley."

"Your land?"

"South half, section 32."

"In cultivation?"

"Ten acres—you see, it's timbered," Bradley hastened to explain.

"Is it paid for?"

His visitor smiled grimly. "It's a homestead and pre-emption. I've another two months' residence duties to do."

"And another ten acres to break, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"How about the pre-emption?"

"I'm afraid I'm in arrears on my payments."

The information so far gleaned sounded to Long's experienced ears fairly hopeless, but the homesteader might have some chattels.

"Any stock?" he inquired, encouragingly.

"Only a yoke of oxen."

"Are they clear?"

"No, there's a lien note against them. Mr. Thurston owns it now."

"Who's he?"

"A lawyer here—you'll be meeting him before long, I guess."

"I suppose so," admitted the manager. "But tell me, Mr. Bradley, what do you own? You know what I mean—something to sell to repay a bank loan?"

"Only some cord-wood, sir. But the trail's gone now, and won't be fit to haul for some while yet—besides, the wood's new cut, and the townsfolk won't buy it till its dry."

"I see," said Mr. Long, thoughtfully. He put his pen down; and leaned back in the swing chair. He hated to speak the next words, but it simply had to be done: "I'm afraid it's no go, Mr. Bradley. With only an unpatented homestead and pre-emption, and oxen covered by a lien note, you've nothing to justify a loan—even thirty dollars."

Bradley rose to his feet, and his voice trembled a little. "I was afraid I couldn't get it," and he tried to smile.

But Long was a judge of men and if ever he saw anguish in another's face, he saw it now: "Tell me, Bradley, what do you need the money for—is it really pressing?"

The homesteader's grey eyes were looking out of the window and he replied slowly, controlling his speech: "My wife—she's going to have a baby and we've no groceries in the shack—nothing."

"Whereabout's your farm?"

"Eighteen miles north, on the Saskatchewan river."

"Did you come in to town this morning?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"I walked."

"Sit down, Bradley; we'll fix this thing up somehow between us. Now, as I told you, as a banking proposition, it's not up to standards, but *I* know well enough you'll repay when you sell your cord-wood." He picked up the pen again, and reached for a cheque form. "You cash that, and get the stuff you need.—No, no thanks, not a damn word—and I hope the wife will come through fine. There, good-bye," and he held out his hand.

"Ye gods!" murmured the bank manager to himself when his new-found friend had gone, "what pluck some people have. The government bets them 160 acres to \$10 that they can't live on it—Suffering Moses, before I'd—Yes? Mr. Newlands"—for the accountant had appeared and was apparently agitated about something.

"It's Mr. Thurston, sir, wants to see you—You know, he's one of our best customers," Mr. Newlands prompted.

"Ah! then by all means ask him to step in."

Mr. Long pulled himself together for interview number two. He would not have to lend this one \$30 of his own money, anyhow. He rose to shake hands and he shuddered at the other's clammy touch.

"I'm Thurston, Mr. Long, and an old customer of your bank; I have simply called for the pleasure of meeting our manager. Nothing like getting acquainted, Mr. Long, eh?" and he took the proffered chair.

"No," Mr. Long admitted, "the first thing for a bank manager to do is to get to know the people in his district. It was kind of you to call."

"Not at all. Not at all, Mr. Long, for the advantage is mutual. I am not referring to accommodation. I do not require to borrow in the usual way, and, when I do, my collateral is first class. But, occasionally, you know, Mr. Long, it pays business men to get together."

"Quite so," assented the manager, noncommittally, "they have to, to do business together."

"Ah! you do not quite take my meaning," his visitor explained. "It was the little favours—the little personal matters, to which I particularly refer-

red. Opportunities sometimes occur to make a few dollars, in a land deal, say, and a business man—I call myself a business man, Mr. Long—should not forget his friends."

"Thanks," said Mr. Long, laughing, "but my bank account scarcely runs to land deals."

"That might be arranged. Then, Mr. Long," he smiled ingratiatingly, "my advice respecting credits should be of some value also. I know the people's finances fairly well."

I'll bet my soul you do, thought the manager to himself, but aloud he said: "Again, my thanks. In case of need, I shall know where to go."

"There's Bradley, for instance," continued the lawyer. "I saw him leaving the bank as I came in. He's about on his last legs, of course. Nothing doing there, eh?"

The manager's hair bristled. This man—and judging from the accountant's remarks, one of the town's wealthiest—had first, by his innuendoes, virtually offered to buy him, and was now endeavouring to "work the pump"—to coax him to betray the sacred confidences of his profession. "Bradley?" Mr. Long held himself in with admirable restraint, "a tall man?—clean shaven? Yes. I saw him in the office just before you came in."

Thurston studied the manager's face; and gave it up. It might have been a mask for anything it betrayed. Then he swung into another theme:

"You have not, of course, met my daughter, Mr. Long: and *that* is something we must remedy. Sybil has had the advantage of a good education. That was one reward of my—my slight business success. And the money was well spent, Mr. Long—well spent.

Education, polish, they mean a lot. May we have the pleasure of seeing you this evening?"

"I shall be delighted. At what time?"

"Say 8 o'clock, Mr. Long," and his visitor backed himself out.

"Humph!" said Long; "now how about *that* one? Evidently fond and proud of his daughter. That's for him! But for the rest? Bad eyes. Bad mouth. Bad everything. What does he remind me of? Ah! I know—like something you find under a log."

CHAPTER III.

—AND PLEASURE

THE manager had not long to wait.

"My name's Frank Lewis, Mr. Long," his caller introduced himself, "commonly known as 'Frankie'—and damn their familiarity!"

"I'll promise you, I won't!" Long quickly assured him, and if he smiled, it was altogether excusable, for number three was a joy to look upon.

He was a good fellow, Frank Lewis, "fore" and "aft", but more particularly conspicuous "fore". Some men are stout from hip to collarbones, but not "Gopherburg's Auctioneer, Real Estate and Insurance Agent, gentlemen", as he was pleased to style himself. His rotundity was localized from the third vest button downwards, which gave him the appearance of a human robin. His face was ornamented by a small, black, drooping mustache of the walrus type. And his pudgy nose had not attained its colour—he candidly admitted the fact—except at very considerable expense.

"Tut, tut, Mr. Long, I was but having my little joke, for the object of my call is purely sociable. Some men will not temper business with conviviality, but not so Gopherburg's Auctioneer, Real Estate and Insurance Agent, gentlemen. Take Thurston, for instance, indefatigable in the pursuit of lucre—you

have met our wealthy townsman, Mr. Long?"—(but he waited for no response)—"Ah! there's a shrewd business man for you. Laid the foundation of his fortune by trading gin for Indian 'scrip': 240 acres for a bottle was his usual tariff, but he had to raise the ante to two bottles if the 'breed' was avaricious, or more than half sober—a shocking waste of trade gin! —you'll admit it yourself. But that, of course, was some years ago and mere 'chicken feed' to subsequent proceedings; land deals, timber deals—the gamut of western business enterprise. And look at him to-day; opulent without being co'pulent; a King among his fellows and the only owner of an automobile in town."

Mr. Long smiled, and his visitor wiped his brow and continued: "But I did not come here to speak of Thurston, inestimable citizen as he may be, and I have, I fear me, been wasting valuable time," Frankie bowed, "with my hemorrhage of words—"

This was too much for Long and he gave himself up to unrestrained mirth. "Then, tell me, Mr. Lewis," he managed at last, "just exactly what *did* you come here for?"

"Hush!" expostulated his visitor, raising his fat little hands, "we must not rush the ritual, gentlemen."

"I am all patience."

"Then—"

"Yes?"

"I came—"

"Ah?"

"To ask you, Mr. Long—"

"Yes?"

"To come and have a drink!" and he looked at his prospective guest as one who had approached an important matter with some degree of delicacy.

The manager smiled his appreciation of the honour done him, but shook his head negatively.

"What?" Frankie's elevated eyebrows expressed surprise, "a case of the dog that b—"

"Dog nothing, Mr. Lewis. I make a practice never to take a drink in bank hours."

"Not a drink? Not *one* little snort?" The information was astounding.

"Not even a smell," Long elucidated.

"Oh! that's dreadful!—one of the saddest things I ever heard," and Frankie's expression showed how deeply he was moved.

"But true, nevertheless."

"I remember my old Dad—"

"Yes," Long inquired, encouragingly, "was he similarly afflicted?"

"Why no, not exactly, but he, likewise, had a practice, a motto, or, shall we say tenet? 'Frankie,' he would say, regarding me with paternal eye, 'never take a drink before 6 o'clock, and you'll never be a drunkard!—but you'll always be a fool'."

"And you—?"

"Well, even my enemies would scarcely call me that."

"I'm sure of it," Long assented, "and further, Mr. Lewis, I want to thank you for your kind intentions. We shall be the best of friends, I do not doubt, in spite of all the practices, mottoes—or, shall we say tenets?—in the world," and he held out his hand.

The little man took it good-naturedly, bowed and ambled out of the room.

"Ye gods!" said James Long for the second time that morning.

* * *

" 'Cap' Marsden and Charlie Dunston to see you, sir," Newlands announced—the accountant was grinning from ear to ear.

"Then, let 'em come in."

The manager found himself facing a strange couple—the personification in fact of Frank Lewis' witticism, "the long and short of it".

Charlie Dunston was 5 feet 5 inches in his boots. He had a pale face decorated by a red pointed beard and wore clothing denoting his nationality—a shooting coat with leather shoulder guards, riding breeches and leggings. He was not too clean.

His companion was 6 feet 3 inches in his socks, fair haired, clean shaven, and, in his well-cut tweeds, as fine a specimen of humanity as one could wish to meet. "Cap" Marsden, unlike many tall men, did not stoop, and into Long's vision flashed Landseer's impression of "Dignity and Impudence". He smiled, and waited.

"Permit me, Mr. Long," said Impudence, "to introduce my friend, 'Cap' Marsden. He has 'a sort of a place' on the outskirts of Gopherburg where he makes a bluff at raising cows." Then he lowered his voice. "A good fellow, you understand, and all that,—but, between ourselves, I should not lend him any money."

The embryo giant bowed slightly to the bank manager and to his friend, but not a single muscle of his face moved, and he in turn spoke:

"And permit me, sir, to perform a like service for my friend, Charles Dunston. He deals in horses upon a somewhat extensive scale—in fact, our business with you to-day pertains to a transaction recently consummated. Concerning his credit, you, in due

course, will be the better judge. His beard—is sheer laziness."

Long was entirely at his ease. The woods were full of them. And not for nothing had the practical Canadians for many years prefaced men of *this* nationality with the word "crazy". The war corrected matters to a great extent, for thousands of Canadian-born saw England as she really is, a land of business activity and resourcefulness, a land of common-sense men and women, a land of open-handed hospitality. But this was before the war and the men lounging in his chairs were excellent examples of their type. They were crazy Englishmen.

The manager knew well enough that every single statement and inference made by the two of them (excepting only Marsden's remark about his companion's beard—which was obvious) was untrue. They were amusing themselves—trying to pull his leg. To arrive at the facts he must reverse everything—but the reader need not be troubled to do so.

"Cap" Marsden was a well-to-do Old Countryman, with a fine farm of 640 acres some three miles south of town. Here he raised pure-bred Ayreshires with great success, for he had the money to buy high priced sires and dams, and the shrewd business ability necessary to the success of any undertaking the world over, be it manufacturing, distributing, or running a stock farm. He had also foreseen that the wheat growing West must come to mixed farming, and he had got in on the ground floor for the growing demand. His note, had he desired to use it, would have been good at the bank up to any amount he could possibly require in his operations, say \$10,000.

Charlie Dunston, on the other hand, while of good family, was a "remittance" man. His estate consisted of ten acres and a shack, held under nominal rental. His "extensive dealing in horses" consisted in buying a plug or two from time to time for \$60 or \$70, keeping them, and feeding them for a few months, and then selling, at say, a \$10 advance over what he had given. He "batched" in his shack under conditions which would have disgusted his father's stable boy. On his occasional visits home, he was always met at the boat by trusted family servants and taken to a hotel in a closed cab. Here he was shaved, bathed and dressed in suitable raiment. Then, and not until then, was he permitted to the family bosom.

Long felt in his left-hand coat pocket for his pipe, which he filled and lighted. "If you would care to smoke, why, make yourselves at home," he invited them. "And the transaction recently consummated —to which I owe the pleasure of this visit?"

"Ah!" said the blonde giant, before his friend could reply, "it relates to the sale of a horse."

"Other horses have been sold without the bank being consulted," Long suggested.

"True, undoubtedly true," "Cap" Marsden admitted, "but there is something particularly happy about this one."

"An unusually good sale?"

"I did alright with the bronc," Dunston quickly interjected.

"Then I am afraid you must explain. I'll be the goat."

"Cap" Marsden's eyes twinkled, and he spoke with hushed voice: "It was for *cash*!"

The manager laughed; he knew what was coming.

"I make a point, Long," Charlie Dunston had the floor now, "to share my good fortune on these occasions with my friends—a little jollification, don't you know." He nodded in the general direction of the "King Edward". "Will you join us?"

"I'm sorry, but it's against the rules."

"What?" asked the would-be host, incredulously. "against bank rules?"

"No—of the Medes and Persians."

"To take a drink?"

"In bank hours!" the manager solemnly informed him.

"Oh! I say!" He turned to Marsden with a look as much as to say: "Misfortune stares us in the face, we hoped for great things from this man and we find him wanting."

"Cheer up! my dear good egg," said "Cap" Marsden, addressing his friend, "I gather from Mr. Long's speech that he is less Sahara-like in the evening."

"Oh, damn it all!" Charlie retorted, refusing to be comforted, "What's the good of the evening at this time of day? Here I am with money and a thirst, and prepared to enjoy both. What a town! For once in my life I'd like to live in a place where dryness was unknown."

"I know it," said James Long, with confidence.

"Where?" asked his visitors together.

"It's an aquarium."

Dunston started to reply, but "Cap" stilled him with a "Shut up, Charlie!" A thought had pleased him. "Aquarium?" he said, thoughtfully, "Aquarium? Fish!" Then he placed his hand on the manager's desk on its edge, and drew it along towards

him with a rippling movement in excellent imitation of the finny tribe, and grinned delightedly.

"Come, brother fish," he said, rising, "the banker is right. We're in the wrong pew."

And, waving cordial hands in salutation, the strange pair made their exit.

"Mr. Newlands," said Long, addressing his Accountant from the doorway—and using the words of the Big Man who had named the town of Gopherburg—"I think I'll go to lunch."

CHAPTER IV.

ADVANTAGES

AT 8 o'clock, Long left his home for the promised call at the Thurstons'. The house, on the outskirts of the town, had already been pointed out to him and now it was only a case of getting there by a route equipped with sidewalks. Gopherburg spring mud was something to be avoided and, as Bradley had stated, trails were breaking up.

Following the planked-way, therefore, and watching his steps at the crossings, Long proceeded leisurely to within rather more than a block from his destination. At this point someone, quite evidently no looking where he was going, collided with him; but, as the bumper was a good many pounds lighter than the bumpee, our hero absorbed the shock without harm. He turned quickly, however, to see who it was and found himself face to face with the bank accountant.

The young man in question has already been introduced to the reader in his official capacity and, in which, by the way, his record was one of efficiency. If a fault must be mentioned, it was a tendency under stress of circumstances to "go up in the air" or, in baseball phraseology, "to blow up in the pinches"—a failing, no less in banking, than on the "diamond".

He was an Englishman, and had been imported by the bank he now served at some trouble and expense a matter of five years prior to his Gopherburg appointment. His milk teeth in banking had been cut in the counting house of Messrs. Coutts & Co., London, and in his native habitat he would have affected a cut-away coat, and an aloof manner with the less exalted.

In Winnipeg, the first branch in Canada to which he had reported, an accident had happened to him. He had been rechristened. It occurred in this manner. The glass stood at 32 below zero one morning when Mr. Newlands, in a cloth overcoat and cap, arrived on the steps of the bank simultaneously with other of his brother clerks in their coon coats. From the curve of Mr. Newland's shoulders, and his anxious glances at the closed door, it was obvious to the other young men that the newcomer was not enjoying the winter morning. "What's the matter, Newlands," asked a merry wag, "you surely don't find it cold?" To which poor Newlands had innocently replied: "Well, it is a bit parky, don't you know!" So "Parky" Newlands he became, and, to his intimates, will remain until his dying day.

He was slightly stooped and had the lean and hungry look that not infrequently goes with a good bass voice. For the rest, he was a thoroughly nice youth. When we left him confronting his manager—for the purpose of this insight into his character—he had the appearance of being far, far, from gay.

"Why! hello, Newlands!" Long asked genially, "what's your hurry?" Then he noticed that the young man was pale and evidently troubled, and added kindly, "Anything the matter?"

For answer Newlands drew from beneath his left arm a white oblong box such as manufacturers of chocolates use for their fancy wares. This he raised above his head and hurled to the sidewalk at their feet. "That's the matter!" he informed his manager, "and damn her!"

"Your sentence is without subject, Mr. Newlands, so I do not know the object of your wrath. I would suggest, however, that you cool down, as you appear to be a bit hot under the collar."

"I beg your pardon, sir. I shouldn't have lost my temper. But I'm plain mad."

"Then perhaps you had better explain."

"Oh, it's Sybil Thurston—I've been giving her a rush for months. But to-night, when I went to call, she gave me the icy mitt."

Long did not smile. He had misgivings that he was the innocent cause of the present trouble. "Tell me," he asked, "did she ever treat you this way before?"

"No," the reaction had set in now, and "Parky" was near to tears, "and she told me to run along—like a good little boy."

"Too bad, Newlands, but I wouldn't take it to heart. You know what girls are."

The implied compliment to his manhood appeared to give some comfort. "All right, sir," he replied, "Good night!"

Long resumed his way, but the impulse to look back was irresistible. He turned just in time to see the box of chocolates—the object of a well directed kick—scatter its contents in a sea of rich, brown mud.

It did not take Long many seconds to reach the Thurston house, but quite sufficient for him to review

the recent scene. "I think, Jimmy, my boy," said he, as he raised the knocker, "it behooves us to proceed with caution."

The present Thurston house was what might be described as the third time of asking. His first house cost him \$3,500, and he sold it for \$5,000. The second cost \$5,000, and he parted with it for \$6,500. This, the third, was built with the proceeds of the second, and omitted all previous errors of construction.

That he and his wife—now dead—must, in the periods between selling the house over their heads and erecting a new one, live in a rented shack at much discomfort, was a matter that concerned him not at all. The monetary advantage was incontestable. Every time you did it, you got a better house for the original investment. It was easy money. It was business. Nothing in the world would have convinced him otherwise.

And if the exterior, with its south-west exposure and well-kept grounds, was all that could be desired, the place within stacked up pretty well to what a home should be. The furniture was solid and comfortable—due largely to the good taste of the late Mrs. Thurston—and the rugs were of excellent selection. With regard to decorative objects, such as pictures, possibly the less said the better. The west has passed through many "booms", but it is still too young to have experienced one in art. Happy exceptions truly exist where a few good things by modern artists, etchings or coloured prints, may be found, but these are exceptions. The Thurston collection was about western standard, but mercifully—as is usually the case—it was "skied". Most of the

monstrocities hung from just beneath the picture moulding; the balance bloomed above, where flies winter and the spiders spin their webs.

But the Swede maid has responded to the caller's rat-tat; and he is ushered into the living room.

"Ah, Mr. Long," his host welcomed him, "we are glad to see you. My daughter—Sybil—Mr. Long."

Our hero bowed and, simultaneously, received a shock. Possibly he had not quite made up his mind what to expect, but it was certainly something more or less associated with his impression of the father, that is, far from pleasing. Sybil, he immediately realized, was by no means hard to look upon. She was a blonde and her golden hair was nicely waved. Her figure did not lack grace, or her face girlish charm. And as for her frock, it belonged to the "havoc working" class—a soft, silk thing that showed off the "lines" advantageously, and covered nothing that might aid in giving the effect desired.

For the next fifteen minutes the trio discussed generalities; Gopherburg mud, the spring grain market, the arrival of the robins and other migratory birds, the last "best seller", the latest dance music, Long's liking for his new domicile—anything, in fact, that occurred to any of them to keep the pot of polite conversation simmering.

Presently Papa Thurston glanced at the clock on the mantle and rose to his feet. He had, it seemed, some unfinished work at his office requiring attention. He asked his daughter "to kindly excuse him. The young people would, he was sure, be able to entertain one another. And, as for refreshment—he hoped Mr. Long would not hesitate to avail himself—the decanters were in the dining room."

Well done, perfect host, and most dutiful and obedient of parents!

"I'm so glad, Mr. Long, that father thought to ask you, for I've been simply *dying* to see you for myself."

"Most kind of you to say so, but I'm afraid—"

"No modesty, now!" Sybil laughed, raising an attractive round, white arm, warningly, "you don't have to be."

"Modest?"

"No! depreciative of your good looks."

"One's supposed to say 'thank you' for pretty speeches; and, so say I."

"And—"

"And what, young lady?"

"One's *supposed*, young man, to do one's best to say something nice in return. But, never mind—if we find it *difficult*," and she smiled her very prettiest.

"I'm probably rusty, Miss Thurston—too long pioneering in the west, and that sort of thing. The youngsters coming on should do better. Mr. Newlands, now, should be good material?"

Sybil looked up quickly, anxiously, but his face reassured her. "Oh! 'Parky'. He's a joke."

"Parky?"

"Didn't you know his nick-name?" and she told him the story with much mirth. For such is fate, that if a poor mortal must bear a cross in this world—and it was a cross to Newlands—its wretched history must trail behind.

Long smiled. "He's a nice fellow, Miss Thurston, all the same."

"Why!" she objected with finality, "he's only a kid."

Since his accountant, at the lowest computation, must be 24, and the scornful charmer before him, at the highest, 22, Long realized that a woman's viewpoint is not necessarily based upon the facts. In which case argument would be somewhat futile.

There is an ancient game in which recognized opening moves are known as "Gambits", but the game the fair Sybil was now engaged in was so much more ancient than chess, and the moves of such infinite variety, that no collective term is available. Let it suffice that this daughter of Eve was not unskillful and now made move two.

"Do you play the piano, Mr. Long?"

"I'm sorry to say I don't."

Sybil moved in the direction of the cottage grand.
"Would you like me to play you something?"

"Oh, please." Long was very fond of music, and, though he could not play himself, his ear was excellent.

So Sybil charmed it. She played some little classical bits and some little popular bits, and sang softly to the latter. Then she turned and smiled upon her victim. "Here's something we can sing together," and she beckoned him over with the undeniable first finger of her sex.

Long was a very fair baritone and the effect was highly successful. It was Sybil's next move.

"I've something else here, Mr. Long," she turned inviting eyes backward and upwards, "but what's the use of standing up?" and she feigned to move over to make room for him on the piano bench.

In Long, the bank manager, the bump of caution was highly developed and, while sharing a piano seat with a lady was not a criminal offence, he would

certainly prefer the thing should not be advertised—which it most certainly would be all over Gopherburg if but one passer-by caught him in the act. Why did westerners almost invariably leave their blinds up by night as well as by day? Stupid practice! Then he glanced around the room. Every blind was down. Every curtain drawn. "God bless that Swedish maid!"

O Sybil!

Much can be learned by devoting a few idle moments to watching a sheet of sticky fly-paper spread newly opened in a sunny window. It is quickly noted that flies, while almost identical in appearance, are, psychologically, separable entities in character and temperament. Some, infatuated by the offering before them, "rush on", and meet their fate, as did Clarence in his butt of malmsey. Others stalk in, thigh deep, sticking out their chests with apparent bravado—like stout-hearted bathers into an icy sea. And others, again, stand timidly on the brink. They feel the attraction. They know the thing is sweet. But, "to resist temptation is safe!" —was it not so written in their copy-books?

Men are very like flies. Some will fall for anything. Some fall out of bravado. Some won't fall at all. And poor Sybil was having most indifferent success with the one sharing her piano bench.

The lure of the pretty bare shoulder—and the strap had slipped down with her playing—was something he must keep his eyes off. Nor must he permit the round white arm pressing against his sleeve to move him unduly. As for the accidental occasion, when her silken ankle reaching for the pedals rubbed against his, it was up to him to keep his legs out of the way.

The thing was, to Sybil, a little difficult to understand and, admittedly, disappointing. Not to her remembrance had the charm of that shoulder in the past failed in its purpose. The opportunities of the piano bench had not, she felt convinced, been overlooked by "duetists" in the past. And, just because she had set her heart on this one, he had been as impressionable as a stuffed owl. Well! it was no go! She must "move"! That is to say, she moved over to the davenport; and took her intractable fly with her.

Would Mr. Long like to see some of her snapshots when she was at school in the east? Mr. Long politely would. And they got off to a good start at "Sybil, in closing-exercises dress" about amidships. That is to say, our young people were approximately occupying the centre of the davenport side by side, or, as it is termed in Euclid's classic, "each to each".

"Sybil, in school play costume" necessitated the turning over of the page in the album, in doing which her warm palm rested on the back of Long's hand, and her cheek reposed temporarily on his shoulder. But she laughed her apologies; and Long moved over three inches.

Additional snap-shots, and repeated moves, got them to "Sybil, in a bathing suit!" and—the end of the davenport. In this interesting picture, Long saw even more of her anatomy than her evening dress permitted—for that was years before an enlightened generation of dressmakers had realized the possibilities and delights of knee-length skirts and rolled stockings. But all without results. The touch of her hands and arms were alike without avail. And the man was *fidgeting!*

Some years previously an excellent musical comedy had appeared, entitled "The Greek Slave", and Sybil, a musical young lady, owned a copy of the score. In it is an amusing duet concerning a man of stony nature, and Sybil, in singing it over many a time and oft had been struck by the words. It was one of those things "when found" a resourceful girl "made a note of". They run something as follows:—

*"If flagons should fill to the brim, do you think,
With wine of a high degree
Oh, would it make him warm?
And bring him into form?
It has always that effect on me."*

"Now, I'm going to get you some refreshments, Mr. Long. What would you like, some port wine or whiskey?"

"Please! Miss Thurston, absolutely nothing. I've enjoyed our evening very much, but it's getting late and I really must be going," and no entreaty would stay him.

It was in the dimly lighted hallway that Sybil—who had had advantages—played her last trump. The collar of his overcoat must needs be adjusted. Her pretty white arms are raised to his neck. And, as her arms are lowered, she does not step back. No, she looks up into his face with dreamy eyes, and half-parted lips—and smiles.

The message is ages old—old as Mother Eve. It says: "Kiss me, man! kiss me! and no questions asked!"

Now Long was neither better nor worse than the average man—which is nothing to write home about! He had spent two hours or more by this girl's side; the fragrance of her hair had been in his nostrils:

her bare skin had touched him over and over again. For some reason or other—her youth, he supposed it must have been—he knew that he had repelled every urge of sex. But her message now could not be misunderstood. He looked down at her, at her throbbing throat, her red, appealing mouth; and he felt his blood leap in response. The girl, pretty, a prize for any man, was begging him to take her in his arms —was offering him her lips. He was a fool! Damn it all, why not?

O! spoil-sport memory! what tricks thou playest. So late—nearly *too* late—he saw again a miserable youth kicking his sweetheart's chocolates into the mud, and he saw something else—a man, a crawly thing—this girl's father.

He felt quickly in his left-hand coat pocket. He opened his lips and he slipped his pipe between his teeth.

CHAPTER V.

"CUPID" SMITH IN ACTION

SATURDAY had arrived, and with it the privilege of a half-holiday for the Gopherburg branch staff. In a bank, a holiday means that the door may be locked at a certain hour, or, on full legal holidays, not opened at all; but whether the members of the staff are free to pursue their several avocations is, in practice, a matter of circumstances. Work calling for attention or a particularly busy morning, may turn a half-holiday into half a half-holiday, or, on the other hand, cessation from labour may not occur until 6, 8, 10 o'clock to say 2 o'clock next morning. The end of a month falling on a Saturday, or the arrival of inspectors, may "ball up" the nominal week-end holiday in a most distressing manner.

On this particular Saturday, the day's work was through at 4.30, and, as this did not leave time to do anything very much before supper, Long decided to write some private letters. He had just finished the weekly installment to his mother, and placed it, and a bank draft for \$30—a monthly contribution he made to bring up the dear old lady's income to comfortable proportions—in the envelope already written, when a shout outside attracted his attention. He sauntered over to the window.

Across the street a red-coated policeman was strid-

ing south. At the corner two men gesticulated wildly and then followed in the direction taken by the "Mountie". There was the sound of running feet. Long smiled and quoted aloud:—

*"News of battle, news of battle,
Hark! 'tis ringing down the street."*

He pitched the letter home into the mail tray, reached for his hat, and went out onto the bank verandah.

Round the corner came one in a great hurry, a short, fat man, of robin-like characteristics. And yet, as Long watched the little man's efforts to hasten, his memory went back to years before to a tame penguin in a Zoo, dressed in a green coat with red braid edging, for whom he had thrown small fish as one throws tit-bits for a dog. The penguin, which can both walk and hop, did not know which it could do quicker, and, in its anxiety to reach the delectable fish with all possible dispatch, would walk and hop alternately in its extremis. So, with Frankie Lewis—for, of course, it was he. It is not meant by this that he actually hopped both feet together as does a robin, but rather that he introduced into his usual walk or amble, an *extra* step. A sort of one, two, three—skip with right, one, two, three—skip with left. There! now the reader has it!

Seing the Manager on the verandah, he waved both arms over his head. "Come, Mr. Long, come. It's a fight. A pippin! The preliminaries are over, and Jesse Saunders has taken 'the count'. Some men say that they wouldn't give a tinker's damn for a fight, but not so Gopherburg's Auctioneer, etc., etc." (he cut the fuller description in view of the exigencies of the occasion); "'a ring-side seat' for his."

Judging from the alacrity with which Long, at the words "it's a fight", had stepped off the verandah, it would appear that he likewise did not belong to the category of those mentioned; and the remainder of Frankie's dialogue had been spoken as they legged it towards the King Edward. Long had managed to interject the question: "What's it all about?", but it were better to give the facts calmly rather than depend on Frankie's attempt, broken up as it was, by gaspings for breath. If we ask too much of him at the present juncture we shall be having him die on our hands of apoplexy, or something equally dreadful.

The trouble at the King Edward was the outcome of a fracas of some weeks previous, when Thomas Smith, Constable, Royal North West Mounted Police, had, in the ordinary course of his duty, arrested a "bohunk" named Paul Olynyk. There was nothing in this to which anyone could fairly take exception, since Olynyk had, on the occasion in question, smashed considerable of the King Edward's bar glass-ware; had knifed another foreigner on trifling provocation; had resisted arrest and had generally set at nought the laws of his adopted country.

In spite of these things, however, one "Ugly" Mike, a lumber-camp buddie of Olynyk's, had represented Constable Smith's action vehemently. Usually the two cut-throats went on their sprees together, but "Ugly" Mike was not present when his friend got into trouble, and only heard of it upon that worthy's return—a sadder and poorer man.

"Ugly" Mike had then, as hinted, spoken bitter and blasphemous words; and had vowed that he would, at the first suitable occasion, go to Gopherburg, and "clean up" policeman Smith.

At the time whereof we write, trainloads of "Ugly" Mikes and Paul Olynyks were arriving in Canada weekly. The steamship companies needed them to fill their steerage accommodation. A paternal government needed them to make good under its immigration policy. But Canada, as a land of white men, needed them not at all.

In those days, passengers waiting for trains at junctions, such as Sudbury, would see colonist cars, crowded with rough-looking foreigners, stop for water on their way westward, and proceed again on their way. "What awful faces!" women would remark; and men, having the welfare of Canada at heart, would turn away in disgust. Well might they! For this was the dregs of the world. The scum of Europe—down-trodden, resentful and vicious. Among them were our "red flag" soviets-to-be; our house-breakers and bank robbers of to-day.

Read the criminal court reports in the Canadian papers, those who will, and note the names of those convicted of murder, knifings, robbery and the still more loathsome crimes. These tell the tale—too well they tell the tale.

So "Ugly" Mike was now in town to make good his boast. He was, in stature, 6 feet 2 inches, and weighed 210 pounds. He had, in the preliminaries alluded to by Frankie Lewis, already done some casual damage, such as throwing several dozen tumblers in quick succession, and with tolerable accuracy, at the moose heads which adorned the bar-room walls. But this was before he was properly warmed up, and was really only playfulness. Later he had demanded *vodka* and, when Jesse Saunders, unable to supply the specialty, had handed him a bottle of whisky, he

had broken the said bottle over the unoffending bartender's skull. It was at this stage of the proceedings that Ben Pengelly, the proprietor, had sent a messenger with a hurry-up call for the policeman.

Smith—who had received his corporal stripe since the Olynyk fracas—was 5 feet 8 inches, that is to say, he had barely scraped through into the force on the minimum height rule, and his weight was 150 pounds. He was an Englishman, as were hundreds of the old Royal North West Mounted Police, and the only "yellow streak" in his make-up was the one down the outside seam of his blue riding breeches. The man who designed that uniform must have been a humorist! Smith had fair hair and light blue eyes, and his complexion was as pink as a girl's. The "Three Graces" had nick-named him "Cupid"; but it was only used in their own intimate circle, and then of him, not to him—two vastly different things.

We now return to his entrance into the King Edward bar to attend to the requirements of one "Ugly" Mike, with Long and the breathless Frankie close on his heels.

It might be said with considerable truth that Mike had the floor. Ugly as he was at any time, in appearance, nature and name, he was now a brandy-soaked maniac, evil, leering and dangerous. Holders of "ring-side" seats did not press in, and the ring itself was encircled by sporting, but nervous, humanity on three sides, and the solid bar on the fourth.

Now, the other contestant in the main bout stepped into the ring and raised his left hand languidly. But Long, who was watching him intently, could not be sure whether the action was to stroke the

downy mustache or to stifle a slight yawn. It appeared to be the latter. The "seconds", the reader will understand, were now "out of the ring", and all eyes must be focused on the principals.

"Ugly" Mike made the first break. He looked around for something to smash—for some deliberate act of law defiance right under his enemy's eyes—and saw the very thing. At Yuletide many bar-tenders decorated the heavy lengthy mirror on the wall behind the bar with suitable greetings. It is done with soap on the glass, and Jesse Saunders had been so proud of his artistic work at his last attempt that he had left it up to this late in the spring. It read: "HAPPY CHRISTMAS" in letters a foot high.

"Ya!" shouted "Ugly" Mike, indicating the mirror with an evil leer, "Merry Christmas! God damn!" and stooping quickly for the iron cuspidor at his feet, he raised it above his head with both hands, and hurled it at the words of good will.

A sigh of relief went up from the ring-side. Better, infinitely better, a \$200 mirror smashed to smithereens than one of their heads.

Several options were open to Corporal Smith. He could, for instance, had he so wished, have named several men in the room to assist him in the arrest of the "bohunk". At a pinch, that is, if he considered his life in danger and in self defense, he could have drawn his service revolver from its holster. But to the everlasting credit of the little "red coat", and the gallant Force to which he belonged, he did neither—as a matter of fact, they did not even occur to him. He strode into the middle of the ring. He was going to arrest his man with his hands!

Then "Ugly" Mike turned. The moment had

arrived. He would smash the policeman as he had promised. Stepping close, he stooped down until his face, with its high cheek bones, was looking down into that of his foe: hate, lust, evil personified. Then he spoke:—

“You tak Paul, eh? You tak me—you red coat son of a—”

Crash!—the balance of the insult was interrupted by Cupid Smith’s left fist to “Ugly” Mike’s jaw. The brute staggered and fell.

Long could have jumped around on his toes in his excitement, but he didn’t. He was too busy watching Smith. What would the little man do now? What he *should do*, undoubtedly, was to keep up close and, when “Ugly” got up for round two, promptly knock him down again.

What Smith actually did was to step back a couple of paces and adjust his red tunic. The forward lunge of his left arm had dragged the left side too high above the belt. He, therefore, took the bottom edge in his fingers and pulled it down into place.

The quick catching of breath through “ring-siders” teeth warned the policeman that “Ugly” Mike was rising to his feet, and he glanced in his direction. The “bohunk” was up now. He, in turn, stepped back, swung quickly round, and rushed in like a bull. If his right swing had landed, it would have spelled “quietus”. But it did not land, except as a glancing blow on the red-coat’s forearm. The rest of the round went to Smith. His right fist caught the blue-grained chin fair on the point, wrenching the thick neck up and backward until the man’s whole body appeared to Long to be straightened out. Then it went down like a log.

The "Mountie" gave his prisoner a generous ten seconds, according to Queensberry rules. The fun was over, and he must now proceed with the discharge of his duties. He stepped up close and, with the toe of a highly polished boot, prodded the subdued "bohunk" in the ribs. "Get up—you—" he commanded and, when the other obeyed, slipped on the handcuffs. Then he took him by the arm and urged him firmly toward the door. A David leading off Goliath.

As they went past Long, he murmured for Smith's benefit: "Neat! Very neat!" and "Cupid", glancing round quickly and seeing Long's smiling face, permitted his right eyelid to droop the merest fraction. That was their introduction.

CHAPTER VI.

UNORGANIZED LABOUR

THE bell of the Anglican Church was ringing its joyous bidding to Christian souls: "*Ding!—ding!—ding!—ding!*" If the little frame spire which served as a belfrey had contained a second bell, the message would doubtless have been "*Ding!—dong!*", but the bell that rings "*ding!*" cannot "*dong!*" also; and to exaggerate its powers by slipping in a "*dong!*", or to overlook facts altogether and record its "merry peal", were misleading and absurd.

Long, whose house was half a block distant, had just breakfasted on grape fruit, rolled oats, kidneys and bacon, toast and coffee. That is to say, he had started the day in the proper Sunday spirit and was feeling at peace with the World. The sheep kidneys he had particularly enjoyed, since they had cost him nothing. "Why sure!" had said the butcher when the new customer was doing his shopping the previous day, and had inquired for these delicacies, "You can have 'em, an' welcome. They ain't no good to me." What an unsophisticated dear old prairie it was—once upon a time.

Ding!—ding!—ding! "There it goes again. Last time of asking," said Long to himself. "It's a lovely day, but I guess I'll go to church."

He got there just as the Rev. Jones, having

"*ding-ed*" the bell at the south, or spire, end, was proceeding to the north, or chancel end, to conduct the service.

"When," announced the Rev. Jones, "the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive."

If, thought Long as he glanced hastily around, all the wicked men in Gopherburg are now present, it is a better burg than most. For those who had answered the bell's summons consisted of: Samuel Thurston, "Parky" Newlands (alone in the choir stalls) and himself. Of women—the wicked is, of course, omitted in their case—there were Mrs. Jones, Sybil Thurston, and Mrs. Slaney—the char and wash-lady who cleaned the church.

Of all the beautiful things in this world arranged by man in worship of man's Creator, nothing surpasses the ritual of the English Church service. Through the centuries the zealots and dignitaries of the church have selected, culled and added, until the final result is a classic, a finished work of art beyond the criticism of man.

With regard to the sermon, usually the well-meant but amateurish effort of the incumbent, the less said the better. In fact, if he only *would* say less out of consideration for his congregation, it would be decidedly better, though the poor gentlemen seldom realize the fact. Occasionally, a modest one comes to the fore such as he who, having arrived in the pulpit sermonless, announced the fact in these words: "I find, dearly beloved brethren, that I have left my sermon at home. I will therefore read you a chapter from the Bible—which will do you much more good."

Yes, a ten minutes' sermon should be the ambition of most preachers and, if they must err in their timing, let it be on the side of mercy.

So, to return to the Rev. Jones and his congregation, it may be stated fairly that the service progressed in the usual manner up to the first hymn. The psalms, it is true, were read, as the Rev. Jones had offended the organist some weeks previously, and chanting was out of the question: but organless psalms are not too bad. The hymn, however, presented difficulties to Long's mind. Would the Reverend gentleman call upon Sybil Thurston or would he play the organ himself? He wouldn't; and he couldn't. He opened his book and announced: "We will now sing hymn number 112: 'Christians, dost thou see them on the holy ground'." He pumped a little air into the organ and put his finger on the note. The choir, consisting of "Parky" Newlands, performed wonders in providing bass harmony, but what a pitiful thing it was; everyone feeling uncomfortable and self-conscious and wishing they were outside in the sunshine.

The Rev. Jones' words from the pulpit were very brief. The pathetic grey-bearded old man was through, and he had no desire to prolong the agony.

He told them that, as they were aware, Mrs. Jones and himself were leaving in a day or two. They had, he said, tried to do their duty. He hoped his successor would meet with more appreciation. Good-bye.

It seems difficult to believe that what had been intended for an act of kindness to an old man was responsible for the temporary wrecking of the church in Gopherburg. But such was the case.

The *causus bellum* had originated the previous fall, when the Bishop, having promoted the incumbent, a man of fair capabilities, to a city parish, had insisted upon the Rev. Jones filling his shoes. The Vestry had objected at the time. The Rev. Jones did not look the part in their eyes; and they urged him to try again. But the Bishop would not try again: The Rev. Jones was altogether suitable for Gopherburg; all they were going to have; and they could leave him or lump him—or words to that effect. And, after giving the Bishop's nominee a few weeks trial, the congregation had done both. That is to say, they had "left" him; and "lumped" coals of fire upon his bowed old head.

Which side was right? Of that the reader shall be the judge.

The Rev. Jones had entered the ministry late in life. He had, before coming to Canada, officiated in a lowly fishing village in England where, possibly, he had been looked up to by the fisherfolk for manners and speech less rough than their own, and, it is to be hoped, for kindly deeds.

In western Canada, however, where men are business-like and practical themselves, they expect tolerable efficiency even in a clergyman; whereas the Rev. Jones (however sincere a servant he may have been of his Master) was hopelessly impossible as a light and leader among men. He was doleful, where he should have been cheerful; inefficient, even in the conduct of a simple service; and tactless to the last degree.

Then, in the last mentioned disqualification, he had been ably abetted by his grey-haired wife. She had called upon the wives of her husband's flock, it

is true, but the tenor of her small talk was not conducive to peace.

"And what is your husband?" she would inquire, say, of Mrs. Billings.

"He's the section boss!" the proud hostess would reply.

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Billings, I understand—a navvy!"

Possibly a similar line of conversation with Mrs. Cawley-Brown had approached the pinnacle of unhappy speech, for the Cawley-Browns had flat silver which had been in *his* family since the reign of Charles III. Yes! we insist—we heard it with our own ears, "the third!"

In answer to Mrs. Jones stereotyped question, she was informed that the man whose tea she was drinking was "Staff-Sergeant in the Mounted Police".

"Indeed!" commented the good lady, pursing up her lips, "a 'bobby'!"

So the Rev. and Mrs. Jones had very shortly outstayed their welcome in Gopherburg. The Vestry had demanded the presence of the Bishop in their midst, and, in words of one syllable, and piping hot at that, had told him to take his man away and be quick about it. True, he had become a little peeved, the worthy Bishop, and reproved the erring Vestry-men for waywardness, and similar offences against his authority, but all to no purpose. The Vestry gave him to understand in the end that it was just as pig-headed as he was—and that was saying a good deal.

A sorry story of God's work suffering through inefficient service; but by no means the only one in western Canada. Religion may not be comparable with business, but, for effectiveness and progress,

ability is as essential in one as in the other. The stipends paid to the clergy in many parishes were then (and still are, for that matter) miserable doles, which a brakesman on a freight train, a coal miner, a mechanic, or any other class of organized labour, would scorn. What encouragement is there for capable men to devote their lives and energies to the work under such conditions, or, having committed themselves to it, to give their best? Yet it would be basely untrue to infer that the standard is low throughout. Hundreds of fine men have devoted their lives wholeheartedly to their duties, dragging their wives and children in the process through the mire of poverty and want.

The question of the church in western Canada is only *a part of the whole* and, if the branches of a tree lack vigor, there must be something ailing with the trunk.

If a great business is "sick" these days, an "efficiency expert" is called in. What would such an one say of the church after his investigation?

(a) Your workers are underpaid, so you are unable to command a full staff of the ablest men.

(b) The consequence of (a) is, that you are obtaining unsatisfactory results.

(c) The cause is that you have attempted to spread yourselves too rapidly—which has created an "overhead expense" you are unable to bear.

(d) The *remedy* is to close up the less important branches for the time being, and concentrate on the more fruitful fields. Then, when your organization and finances are on a sound basis, branch out again slowly, using your surplus resources and energy to an assured success."

We can see the righteous shocked beyond expression. "What! leave the Chinese and Fiji Islanders without the dear Missionaries? Terrible!" No more terrible than to pay the clergy a pittance instead of a living wage; to permit their children to grow up ill-nourished and poorly clad; and their wives to grow old before their time. So let the righteous objectors take a day off to think it over, and then either double their subscriptions or stop their hollering.

It was with thoughts such as these that Long left the "gloom of God's empty house" and went out into the cheerfulness of the sunny Spring morning.

CHAPTER VII.

ORGANIZED LABOUR

IT WAS the following Tuesday afternoon that Long came out of the bank smiling to himself, for banking is not altogether devoid of humour on occasion to those who appreciate that sort of thing.

A farmer, by name William Caldwell, had rushed into the manager's room just before closing hour with a request for a \$200 loan, and, while evidently most anxious to obtain the money, the man was so obviously consumed with mirth that Long determined to have it out of him.

"What do you need the money for?"

"To pay a note, Mr. Long."

"Who to?"

"Rob Darley, the horse dealer."

Long pondered. "I don't remember seeing a past due note of yours to him in the office."

"It's not due! I only gave it to him Saturday." Caldwell was smiling broadly.

"Then what do you want to pay it for?"

"I don't. He's making me."

"Oh, forget it, Caldwell! You know he can't make you pay a note that's not due."

"It's a lien note. You see if he can't."

Long took a lien note form out of his drawer and read the lien clause until he came to: "And if the

vendor should consider this instrument insecure, he shall have full power to declare it due and payable—" He whistled.

"Now you've got it," said the farmer, grinning. "You see, Mr. Long, we made a little trade on Saturday. I took a heavy team from him, and gave him my light team of mares and a lien note on his horses for \$200."

"And?"

"Well, you see, he says my little mares aren't what he thought they was."

All was clear now. Caldwell, a shrewd young farmer of Bruce County up-bringing, had beaten Darley in a trade, and the horse dealer was "squealing". He was calling the note on his team on the grounds of insecurity. This was poor sportsmanship all round, for the clause in the lien note was never intended for such a purpose, and further, a horse dealer should never "squeal". It's his business to know horses and he uses such knowledge to his own advantage nineteen times out of twenty. On the twentieth he should grin and bear it.

Long filled out a note for \$200 and flicked it across his desk for the farmer to sign. "All right," he said, "the teller will give you the money. No need to say where you got it, you know. We must keep peace in the family."

Caldwell smiled his understanding. "I always did have a little savings bank account here, Mr. Long." And he departed to settle with Darley.

So, the day's work being finished earlier than usual, Long was out on the street, still smiling over the horse deal. "*Caveat emptor*," he said, and, looking up, he found himself face to face with the

Mountie who had handled "Ugly" Mike so neatly the previous Saturday afternoon.

"Hello, Corporal," he greeted, holding out his hand, "I think we should know one another."

Smith shook hands. "You're Mr. Long, the new manager, aren't you?"

"Yes, and I want to congratulate you on licking that rough-neck. I've done some boxing myself, but I like 'em somewhere *about* my own weight."

"Oh, that's nothing!" the Mountie replied, running his finger inside the collar of his tunic. "With those 'bohunks' you just want to paste 'em."

Long laughed. "Paste 'em is good!"

"Are you doing anything particular this evening, Mr. Long?"

"Not a thing."

"How would you like to come with me along the line to the gravel train? I know the crew, and I was going out in about half an hour."

"Fine. Come on over to the house and we'll get a cup of tea and something to eat first."

* * *

In due course, therefore, they returned down town to the depot, and then walked the ties east about a mile or so to the gravel pit.

Here they found the train crew, with engine and caboose, ready to back the flat cars loaded with gravel (by means of a steam shovel) up the line to the section gang.

The make-shift ballasting of the original construction, patched up, as it had been of late, with such temporary expedients as willow brush, could be neglected no longer. The road-bed required *gravel*, and

lots of it, and the foreman in charge had received his Superintendent's orders to "push right along" with the work. There is a yarn of an engine, passing through a muskeg in western Canada, sinking one rail and rolling over gently onto its side. The crew jumped—as the story goes—but the engine was never seen again.

The policeman introduced his new friend to one of the gravel train crew with the usual "Meet Mr. Long"—"Glad to know you" formulae, and they were made welcome to the works. On the return trip they could, if they desired, take in the air and scenery riding on the flat cars, but now these were loaded with gravel and they must ride in the caboose.

The train was about to leave, and they were waved aboard by the young man, Joe Kelly. Inside, he held up a warning hand and pointed to two blanket-covered figures sleeping on the long seats on either side of the caboose. He motioned upward to the cupola seats; and thither Long and the Mountie climbed.

The cupola of a caboose—for the benefit of those who know it not—is the little windowed superstructure from which the crew of a freight can look out for trouble from behind, and keep an eye skinned for hot-boxes with the wheels heavily braked on mountain grades, et cetera, and so forth. But there was nothing on this train to look out for, the country being flat, and nothing due over the line until the eastbound passenger next morning.

Here, once the train was in motion, they were free to talk, since the rattle drowned their voices; and Joe Kelly, who had joined them, explained respecting the sleepers.

"The section and gravel crew gangs are working double shift. We are, too—only don't chew the rag about it in town. Them's—" he indicated the recumbent ones—"the engineer and 'con'." His speech was embellished with words superfluous to the narrative, and interrupted by ejections of tobacco juice through the cupola window, but, otherwise, Joe appeared to be a bright enough young fellow, with a passion, so Long gathered, for poker. He continued:

"Our time cards show about sixteen hours a day, but we lay off to sleep, yer understand, five or six hours out of that."

"Then," Long interjected, "I take it the fireman is running the engine at the present time?"

"Sure! And me—I'm running the train. There ain't nothing to it."

"You should be making good money?"

"The 'con' and engineer should go \$350 this month. About \$250 for mine," he grinned, "an' not too bloody bad at that!"

Long was silent; he was comparing figures: The Rev. Jones, with a wife to support, had been receiving, as Rector of Gopherburg, \$75 per month. He, with a bank manager's responsibilities, drew \$142 per month. And this youth, the "god-child" of organized labour, was to receive \$250. Yes! as Joe Kelly had remarked, it was "not too bloody bad!"

The gravel train came to a grinding stop amid the ballasting gang. When the "flats" are loaded, there is a metal plow on the last car, and a strong wire cable attached to this lies along the floor of the flats over which the gravel is dumped by the steam shovel. To unload, a donkey engine winds the cable onto a

drum, and the plow, passing over the flats, throws the gravel to either side.

Long and his companion watched the operation to completion and, on the return journey, took open air seats on a flat car. En route to the gravel pit, they passed through a siding, on the side track of which the living accommodation for the section crew stood, all complete; viz: a string of old box cars converted to their present use for sleeping, eating and cooking. The whole outfit, being on wheels, can be moved from siding to siding as required.

On arriving at the gravel pit, the engine, with its caboose uncoupled from the empties, picked up the string of flats loaded since they left, and returned again to where the ballasting crew was working, Long and Corporal Smith still aboard. But the evening air was now turning cold and they stayed in the warm rather than resume their old seats on the flat.

* * *

On the return trip, when passing through the siding, the engine stopped alongside the water tank for replenishment, which brought the caboose level with the section crew's box cars.

In the open door of a bunk car, one leg supported by the improvised ladder, and the other across his knees, a small, swarthy skinned man was sitting, occupied with his own affairs. At his lips he held a mouth organ, and from this he was producing tuneful minstrelsy.

Continental Europe is the home of music, and while even there education is necessary to produce artists, the power and passion for the muse is inborn. The Welsh, of the nations inhabiting Great Britain, alone have the gift, and to hear Welsh miners singing

their folksongs in perfect harmony as they straggle homeward in small groups from their work, is worth a price for admission.

The swarthy little man's melody immediately attracted the attention of the occupants of the cupola. The refrain was sweet, but dolorous. Hark! he was going to sing. From the box car below them rose the words of the song, poured forth with all the abandon and artistry of the little man's soul.

The air was the same as that produced from the mouth organ, for the greatest virtuoso in the world could not sing and accompany himself on a mouth organ at the same time. The best he could do would be to play and sing alternately—and this was what the swarthy little man was doing.

The words were in a strange tongue, but there was no mistaking the theme. It was a love ballad. The tenderness with which the last two lines were uttered would have made this clear to less intelligent men than Long and his companion. They glanced at one another and Long thought that the Mountie was a shade pinker than usual. He appeared, in fact, to be embarrassed.

It is to be regretted that the song must be translated in order to give the reader the import of the medieval minstrel's words, but the last two stanzas—to which the cupola's occupants were the hidden audience—were roughly as follows:—

*"My Love is wond'rous fair,
A Chieftain's daughter.
For beauty past compare
Gallants have sought her:
Pure is her heart and true
As skies above her,
O! but her eyes are blue—
Wherefore I love her."*

Follows repetition of refrain on mouth organ.

*"My Love is not for me,
For I am lowly;
Yet would I happily
Live for her wholly:
Pure is her heart and true
As skies above her,
O! but her eyes are blue—
Wherefore I love her."*

Long was much interested. "Who is he, Smith—do you know him?"

"He's known as 'Dago' Pete."

"What's his nationality?"

"He's a Galician. Funny cuss! They say he's not right up here." Smith tapped his forehead. "In the winter, he will work as a lumber-jack, and in the summer as a section hand, but he's also a miner. He prospects around quite a bit on his own account, when he feels like it."

"Surely there's nothing here?"

"Not much—no; but the gravel bars of most of the western rivers will give a *showing* of gold. Not enough, you understand, to make them worth while to work."

"Then what does he do it for?"

"Oh!" impatiently, "just to keep his hand in. Don't I tell you—?" the policeman touched his forehead again.

"I suppose you're right," admitted Long, smiling, "I wonder if he sings love songs to keep his hand in, too!"

There was no room for doubt in Long's mind this time. Corporal Smith had flushed scarlet, and, to conceal it, he had turned quickly and stuck his head for a moment out of the cupola window.

It was at this embarrassing juncture that the engineer, having filled his water tank, rang the warning bell and the gravel train started leisurely on its way.

Moved by a sudden impulse, Long, too, leaned out of his window and waved his hand to the little Galician whose love song he had heard. He who was known as "Dago" Pete, looked up, smiled, and waved his hand in response.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DOCTRINE OF CHEERFULNESS

IT MIGHT be said that the Rev. Philimore Dobson "blew" into Gopherburg. That is to say, he "breezed" in unheralded and unsung. The Gopherburgians knew, of course, that he was coming, since the Rev. and Mrs. Jones had gone hence on Tuesday evening, and the Bishop had promised a suitable man in his place. But where he was coming from, and when he would arrive, were unknown quantities.

There was no one to "pump" respecting the prospective citizen, as in the case of the bank manager, for it was doubtful if the predecessor in office had knowledge of the facts and, even if so, no one would have cared to face the old man on so personal a subject. As a matter of fact, the Rev. Jones did not know and, to be candid, neither did he care.

Actually, it was from Wednesday morning's east-bound that the Rev. Dobson stepped into his new parish. He had, doubtless, been told in advance that the Rectory adjoined the church, so all he needed to do was to walk one block up from the depot and look around for the church and, not finding it there, walk another block. From this point of vantage, he espied it one block west.

Small, new western towns are usually situated on one side only of the railway track, which tends to

compactness and economy in lighting, water, sewage, etc. As they become older, the other side may develop along lines of its own, such as sites for flour mill, creamery, hospital and, in the case of the larger cities, these may gradually give way to a business and residential section in rivalry with the original townsite.

From the manner in which the new incumbent proceeded to locate his home, the reader will have correctly assumed that Gopherburg was on one side only, which, as it happened, was the north.

And, having found it? We would expect him surely to go inside and explore! To try out the chairs; to view his bedroom; to pass judgment on the wall papers! Curiosity is a human trait and forgiveable even in a clergyman, but the Rev. Philimore Dobson acted most unexpectedly. He unlocked the door with the key extending invitingly from the lock, slung his bag into the hall with force enough to send it sliding along the floor and closed the door again from the outside. "And that's that," he said, and retraced his steps to the business section.

A few moments later Long looked up from his desk at a head and shoulders that had popped round the door at him, shortly to be followed by the remainder of the black-coated visitor. They introduced themselves.

"What would happen to me," asked the Rev. Dobson, sitting down, "if I smoked a pipe in here?"

"Oh, nothing very serious," Long answered, producing his pouch automatically from the left-hand pocket and handing it across the desk, "'sun cured Virginian, and does not bite the tongue'!" He laughed and picked up his pipe.

"No one like a bank manager to supply local data," the visitor explained his mission. "How's things?"

Long smiled grimly. "My line, or yours?"

"Why, both."

"Then mine's so-so, and your's is black."

"Oh, don't be discouraging. The blackest hour, you know—"

"Then, hop to it! because you've got a long way to go," Long advised, "and, by the way, go slow."

Mr. Dobson lay back and laughed, his black eyes twinkling merrily. "So I'm to 'hop', and to 'go slow'. It can't be done, Mr. Long. If I hop, I'm going to hop fast. Who are the churchwardens?"

"Mr. Mallory, general store keeper, is yours; and Mr. Passman, jeweller, is the peoples' warden."

The new rector produced note book and pencil and made memoranda. "And the organist?"

"There's no such thing. *You* blow air into it, and give the note." It was Long's turn to laugh.

"Oh, no, I don't! Please name suitable candidates."

"How long do you think I've been in Gopherburg?"

"Poor guesser, Mr. Long!"

"Well, I've been here a week."

"Ha, ha, ha, and we said 'go to a bank manager for information'."

"Or, to be more exact, you did. I didn't."

"Then you've done splendidly," said the Rev. Dobson, rising, "and I'm ever so much obliged to you."

"And you'll go slow? You know what these small places are—you tread on somebody's toes every time you open your mouth."

"I understand," said the clergyman, appreciatively, "but I hop—even if I have to keep my mouth shut."

"Then, gang ye ain gait. And what are you betting?"

The Rev. Dobson's hand was on the door knob, but he spun round.

"On what?"

"An organist for next Sunday."

"We of the cloth are not betting men, but if you'll keep it under your hat, I'll bet the cigars."

"It's a go! And I'll come to hear him play."

"That's the proper spirit, Mr. Long—and I'm not too critical."

"Of what—organists?"

"No, cigars!" said the Rev. Philimore Dobson.

"Now there," murmured the bank manager to himself after the cheerful one had departed, "is a young man who will go far!"

The rector's next port of call was the Passman jewelry store, where he was so successful in winning his warden's goodwill that he all but had to listen to the story of that gentleman's life. Side-stepping the issue—for he had much to accomplish before he would be willing to call it a day—he learned that one Will Croft had acted as organist. But he learned more, *viz*: that he had played it very badly up to the time of a slight difference of opinion with the Rev. Jones. The trouble, it appeared, related to an allusion to a hammer by the Rev. Jones in a "p.p." passage, and Will, an honest carpenter by trade, had taken umbrage—but that was all there was to it.

The situation, Mr. Dobson realized, would require finesse. The first thing, however, was to discover if

Gopherburg possessed a second-string in the way of an organ player, good or bad. "Yes," Mr. Passman assured him, "there's a wonderful pianist here, and she can play the organ, too: Mrs. Bridget, wife of the hardware man. But you'll never get her to consent. It's been tried before." Mr. Dobson thanked him and departed.

From Passman's jewelry store to Mallory's general store was but a step, and here the other warden was met, smiled upon, joked with, and won. "Yes, he would be there on Sunday morning with Mrs. Mallory and all the little Mallorys!". He promised it.

"And now for Will Croft," said the Rev. Dobson, and proceeded to the carpenter's workshop, where he found him making up standard sized coffins for stock, and whistling blithely as he worked.

After the usual preliminaries, the rector got down to business. "I understand, Mr. Croft, that you are the organist?"

"Was, Mr. Dobson—was!" He drove a coffin nail vindictively. "But hammering, so I'm told, is more in my line."

"But, surely," the distress was unmistakeable, "you have not decided *definitely* not to play again?"

"Not if I can help it, Mr. Dobson."

"But you would at a pinch—if I simply can't find anyone?"

"Maybe, at a pinch," he stood the coffin up on end and whistled into it, "but work hard, Parson, work hard!"

"I will, I promise I will, Mr. Croft, but it's mighty good of you to stand by in need. I certainly appreciate that."

"Everything," said the Rev. Dobson to himself as he wended his way to the Bridget residence, "is cheery and bright in this cheery world. Now, if I had passed-up friend Will, he would, in due course, have driven one of his coffin nails into the small of my back. As it is, Mrs. Bridget will play the organ with his entire good will."

He rapped at the door of the cosy little bungalow, and a tall, fair-haired young woman opened it and smiled upon him.

"I'm the new parson, Mr. Dobson. May I come in?"

"Why, do." Mrs. Bridget made way for him. "I was just going to get myself some afternoon tea," she smiled apologetically. "I suppose you are not interested in afternoon tea?"

"Not interested? I'd like a jug of tea. And you wouldn't have such a thing as a loaf of bread and some cheese, would you?"

His hostess took one bewildered look at him and bolted into the kitchen to reappear two minutes later with a huge "brown betty" of tea, cold meat, bread and butter. "Now eat, you silly man," she ordered, "and tell me about it afterwards."

Under the effect of Mrs. Bridget's tea, beef and bread—and she was then, and still is, the best bread-maker in Gopherburg—the Rev. Dobson's cheeks assumed their healthy red again, and his black eyes their normal twinkle. He looked up, smiled guiltily, and put one hand up to his face to hide it. "I forgot," he said.

"Forgot to have lunch?"

"And that I hadn't time to have breakfast before the train left at six o'clock."

"Do you know what time it is?"

Defiantly: "No."

"It's half past four. Man, you're crazy!"

"Please don't tell anyone."

Mrs. Bridget laughed. "That you're crazy?"

"Yes, and that I came to you half-starved."

"All right, I won't. But, for Land's sakes, what did you come for? You surely didn't have to make parochial calls your first day in town?"

"Ah!" said the Rev. Dobson, "now we're coming to it. I'm in trouble—terrible trouble."

"In trouble! and you've only been in Gopherburg a few hours. Then why come to me?" Mrs. Bridget was bewildered again. What was the man driving at?

"Because you're the only one who can get me out."

"Me?—ridiculous!"

"No." Her caller broke it gently. "You're the new organist," he announced, and gave way to uncontrolled mirth—merriment as infectious as the measles; and Mrs. Bridget caught it and rocked in her chair. A doctor would probably call it reflex action—or something of that sort, and *that*—or something of the sort—is probably what it was.

Of course, Mrs. Bridget tried to decline the duties imposed on her. But the Rev. Dobson told her that he would "cry like a child" if she did, and the issue was never in doubt. For that matter, it never had been in the mind of the Rev. Philimore Dobson.

* * *

What a congregation it was! Gopherburg and his wife was there, and the spring bonnets were a thing to behold.

Ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, went the bell in the little spire. It still couldn't *dong*, and it would be

incorrect to so state. But it could *ding, ding, ding*, quickly and merrily, and not *ding—ding—ding—ding* like a funeral. Did the Rev. Dobson pull the bell rope? He did not! He had attended to the detail of installing a verger, which left him free to welcome his parishioners on the church steps.

Yes, and there had been choir practices Thursday and Saturday, so that when Mrs. Bridget finished a beautiful simple voluntary, and the Rev. Dobson announced "Hymn number 157—Jesus Christ is risen to-day, Alleluia!" such a burst of joyous praise arose from Christian souls as the little church had not witnessed for many a long day.

That the church was crowded on this particular Sunday could be attributed possibly to the fact that it was Easter Sunday, coupled with natural curiosity on the part of Gopherburgians to see the new rector in action. The point that more particularly concerns us is that from that day forward the little church always *was* crowded—even to requiring chairs both sides of the aisle—long after that Easter Sunday had passed into history, and the rector was no longer new.

Mr. Dobson had a good reading voice, loud and clear enough to be heard to the back seats, and there was a general feeling of efficiency and comfort about the way he conducted a service that made those present happy in being there and joyous in giving praise.

During the singing of the hymn before the sermon, the Rev. Dobson ascended the pulpit. He gave as his text: "St. John 16. 33: 'But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world'." He laid his bible quietly to one side, and this is the gist of what he said:—

"The words of our Lord, that I have chosen for my text to-day, were spoken to comfort the disciples. He was about to leave in anticipation of the grief and tribulation so soon to follow. But this message, and, indeed, all our Lord's messages of comfort and instruction, were for Mankind, and upon them we must order our lives if we would have peace.

"'In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world'. Tribulation! yes, the lives of all of us must contain hardships, worries, sorrows, the lot of Man! and, did we examine them closely, the result too often of lack of kindness one to another, or our own particular weaknesses. But the main thing—the thing I want to drive home to-day, is the spirit in which we should meet them.

"Christianity surely teaches us not only to bear our troubles manfully, but cheerfully in faith. It teaches us to find joy in good works; generosity, brotherly love, in toleration one towards another and in acts of kindness. It dissipates gloom, and puts sunshine into our hearts. If these things are so, then I have read aright the life of our Lord, and His message to Mankind. Christianity is to me a message of good cheer. To a doleful Christianity, I can not, I will not, subscribe.

"So I ask you all to carry from this church to-day one thought: that Christianity and cheerfulness are closely akin. It will help you in your business lives, your family lives, and your associations one with another. And remember, the message is not mine, but His who died for our sins and who is ready to share our burdens: 'Be of good cheer', He said, 'I have overcome the world'."

With the last "Amen", the Rev. Philimore Dobson slipped quietly behind the screen that served as a vestry and removed his surplice with one swift motion; that is, by grabbing it at the collar behind and whipping it over his head. This enabled him to be on the front steps before man, woman, or child could escape, to jolly his congregation as it departed.

Long, coming out with Corporal Smith, caught his eye. "No hurry!" said Gopherburg's new rector, "and remember, I'm not *too* critical."

"What's the joke?" Smith asked his friend as they wandered homeward.

"Oh, it's a story of a man who wouldn't be discouraged."

"Well, I like him fine!" the policeman replied irrelevantly. "A parson who 'packs' nothing to his pulpit but a bible goes down good with me." Which sentence, while expressive enough, should, as English, have made Smith's former headmaster squirm in his narrow grave.

CHAPTER IX.

EACH, AFTER HIS KIND

“IT’S no use, Long, and you’ll never convince me,” said Corporal Smith, waving a deprecating pipe. “With a waist line like yours and the figure of an athlete, you have no *right* to be a banker.”

“But,” protested Long, most obliging of hosts, “overlooking the personal nature of the discussion, what’s your type?”

“Why,” the policeman replied, “there’s only *one* illustrated in classical literature as far as I know: he who ‘had the whole of their cash in his care’ in *The Hunting of the Snark*.”

“I’d laugh if I saw the joke,” said the Rev. Philimore Dobson, “but—spare my blushes—I don’t know *The Hunting of the Snark*.”

So poor Long went to his bookcase and, selecting the volume, handed it over, opened at Holiday’s inimitable drawing.

“The point, Smith,” said Dobson seriously, looking first at his host and then at the illustration, “is well taken. He’s wasted as a banker—he should have been a prize fighter.”

The occasion was one when Long, finding Smith hanging over the rectory fence engaged in conversation with Dobson, had, in all kindness, suggested that they come along to his place and have a chin.

That it pleased them to abuse all the recognized laws of polite conversation at his expense was really no affair of his.

"O, lord love a duck!" said Smith, dropping to his knees before the open shelves. "Just look at his books! Every blessed one in a different cover. How do you do it, Long? Do you mind if I maul 'em?"

"Why, no. Maul them all you like—short of tearing off the covers."

"Come over here, Dobson," demanded the excited policeman. "Don't you see it? It's deliberate. There's hardly two in the same binding. Kiplings—look at them!" He pulled them out, one after another and gave them hasty examination. "MacMillan, Methuen, Doubleday Page, Burt, Grosset & Dunlap—any old publisher, and any old binding, so long as they are *different*. There's method in his madness, but I don't get it. Spill it, Long—please."

"Oh, I don't know," Long replied, "but I hate 'sets', however nice the edition may be. To me, a book is an entity with an individuality all its own. *The Golden Age*, there, in its light gold cover—and it's worthy of it—is a typical example of what I mean. That *Hunting of the Snark*, with its name in large type down the back, is another. And all the others to a greater or lesser extent. I could find any of my favourites in the dark by the feel of them; and, in the light, I can recognize any of them instantly from across the room. Now the advantage of this—Am I boring you? You brought it on yourselves."

"Don't be a chump. Go on," Smith urged.

"Then, the advantage is obvious. Without so much as getting out of your chair—but simply by letting the eye pick them out, you can conjure up all

your friends at will. Look at that Marcus Aurelius—second shelf, fourth from the right—now, can't you see him, sitting there in his white robes, inscribing it on his tablets: '*If it be not fitting, do it not*', and things like that. And the next book to the left, Blackmore's masterpiece, *The Maid of Sker*. Every time my eye catches it, I can hear the crack of Old Davy's broken spar on the top of Parson Chowne's head. The olive-green and gold, in the row above, is Lamb—most modest and honest of men."

"It must be the very devil," Smith interjected, "for you to lose one—to lend it, I mean, and not get it back."

"The devil? It's worse. That's the *third* 'The Life of the Bee' and I had an awful job to get it, for the edition's out of print. Some, I simply won't lend at all: take that *King Solomon's Mines*, for instance. I've been reading that identical copy since I was ten, and money couldn't buy it. When I was a youngster, I used to make a pencil tick after I'd read a book on the inside cover and in *that* one I've done it ever since." He went over to the bookcase and opened the volume, smilingly. "See them? and some say that it's not a classic. Then there are lots of stout fellows one should keep in touch with daily: Allen Quartermain, and Teshoo Lama, and Peter Vibart, and Sir Nigel Loring and, of course, scores of others; they help one to respect one's kind. By the way, which of you is smoking the tobacco with a scent in it, and which the heavy mixture?"

Each pleaded guilty to his particular offence.

Long shook his head. "And you're inveterate smokers, too," he admonished. "If you have indigestion or heart failure some of these days, don't blame me."

"You smoke like a chimney yourself," Smith defended.

"I know, but I smoke pure Virginian, and mild at that." He passed across a half-pound tin. "Smell it—isn't it good? Cool and sweet, and does not bite the tongue."

"Smells like hay, all right. I'll get a tin and try it," Smith consented, "if you think my life's in danger."

"After which," said Long, laughing, "you'll use none other."

"Oh! isn't he a cheerful one, Dobson? First he warns us off our own tobacco, and then he threatens to murder us with his own."

"We should worry!" Dobson replied, indifferently, blowing a great cloud of his perique-latakia abomination into the air. "We do most of our smoking out of doors. It's the ones who live the sheltered life who topple over first."

It was at this juncture that "Cap" Marsden stuck his blonde head round the door, and grinned upon them.

"Why, come in, Marsden," Long invited. "We were deep in shadows and tobacco and, for the moment," he laughed, "I thought it was Pan."

Said Marsden, explanatory to stretching his six feet three inches tenderly upon the davenport: "My bronc gelding threw me clean over his head this afternoon and I thought I was never coming down."

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the joyful Tommy Smith, "I'd have given money to have seen it."

"That's right," Marsden retorted, "laugh your fool head off—you, who ride a Nellie mare."

The policeman took no notice. He could sit anything with hair on it, and he knew that Marsden was aware of the fact. "Yes!" he continued merrily. "He never pulled leather, did 'Cap'. Just took the air like a Prairie Chicken and came down like a huge, leggy spider."

"Oh! forget it, Tommy, or, stiff as I am, I'll crawl off my bed of suffering and pummel you."

Long glanced at the clock and then at the Rev. Philimore Dobson. Dare he risk drinks? "Say, Dobson," he asked, "would it hurt your feelings if I passed the decanter?"

The new Rector of Gopherburg did not look up. He thought for a moment and then returned question for question. "Do you know the story of the prairie parson who was awakened from sleep to find a couple at the door desiring to be married?"

It appeared those present did not.

"Strange!" said Mr. Dobson. "Then I think I'd better tell it: The parson asked the couple in and excused himself while he got dressed. Returning, everything went well with the ceremony until they came to the place where he asked the groom, 'Wilt thou take this woman to be thy wedded wife?' Then the man—" Mr. Dobson paused, his eyes twinkling.

"Well, what did he say?" asked Tommy Smith.

"He said: 'What the deuce do you think I am here for?'"

"Good enough!" and Long, relieved and laughing, busied himself with his duties.

"Talking of yellow dogs," said he, a few moments later, when the needs of his guests had been attended to, "how about the fishing here?"

"Not bad," the policeman replied. "There's a creek empties into the Saskatchewan due north and I've gone there several times."

"Usual kinds, I suppose?"

"Yes, I guess so; but I fish for 'gold-eyes' myself. I had a great catch last year when the river was flooded, and the fish were in the mouth of the creek in the clearer water. Forty odd in a couple of hours."

"Some fishing!"

"Yes. And what would you say if I told you that one of them weighed two and a quarter pounds?"

"I hate to tell you!" Long replied, without a moment's hesitation.

"Well, it's true just the same. My, he was a whopper!"

"Then I'd like to meet his twin brother. Couldn't we arrange a trip?"

"Most any time would suit me," Smith agreed. And Dobson raised a hand in silent assent.

"I wish you joy to your smelly job," added Marsden lazily from the davenport. For "Cap" was an unfortunate, knowing not the gentle art.

"Then that's settled," said Long. "My car will be here shortly and we'll arrange the details later."

Dobson rose to his feet. "And now I must be toddling," he announced.

"What's your hurry?" urged Long.

"The germ for next Sunday's sermon," he tapped his forehead, "has arrived. I must take it home and incubate it. Thanks, Long. Good night, you chaps." And he slipped quietly from the room.

"By the way!" asked "Cap" Marsden, showing signs of life by switching from a reclining to a sitting position on the davenport, "was either of you at the

King Edward for supper to-night? No! Then you've missed something. There's a new dining-room girl—a lulu."

"Oh! you're hopeless, 'Cap'," Tommy Smith reproved, catching Long's eye, and smiling apologetically. "It's always women; you ought to have been a Turk."

"I'm neither worse nor better than ninety-nine men out of every hundred—and I allow the one per cent to exclude present company. I'm only more—honest."

"You can't get away with that," the policeman retorted.

"Yes I can. And you know it. Moreover, single or married, they are all the same. Watch him at the theatres, and the 'leg shows', they cater to him. Watch his eyes when a pretty girl passes down the street. It's only canting hypocrisy that makes the thing less obvious than it is."

"You mean to say, 'Cap', that ordinary decency towards women, respect for her purity, I mean, is just convention?"

Marsden shrugged his shoulders. "Inevitably! How can Man, an animal, get away from his nature? Why, all the larger animals are polygamous."

"The larger herbiferous animals," Long corrected, smiling. "But you're not herbiferous, Marsden."

"No," Tommy Smith joined in. "I've seen you wolfing beefsteak like one o'clock."

"There you go!" Marsden snapped back. "Both begging the question!—sophistry, quibble, even humour—*anything* rather than looking truth in the face. You say I am not herbiferous," —he was now thoroughly worked up, his eyes flashing and his long

arms flailing the air—"but it would be equally true to say I am not carnivorous. Man's *omniverous*—and that's the trouble with Man."

"Your argument is interesting," yawned Tommy Smith, "but not conclusive. What do you think you are driving at?"

"I'm driving at the cause of things since Adam and Eve had offspring—the herbiferous side of Man's nature, which is polygamous."

"Oh, rot, 'Cap'!" Smith argued, "if your idea amounted to anything, authors would have worked the theory to death."

"No." 'Cap' shook his head. "The publishers wouldn't let 'em. Truth, naked, might shock somebody."

"And is *that*, Marsden," Long asked, thoughtfully, "the best you can say for Man—just satisfying, what you contend yourself, is a basical weakness in his make-up?"

"Not by a jugful!" Marsden replied, rising to his full six feet three inches, "because it's only *part* of the game. Speaking for Man as a whole," he concluded, grinning, "I should say that his *interest* in life is in new adventures, and his *fun* in life—in new lips."

CHAPTER X.

ALL IS NOT GOLD

CORPORAL Tommy Smith was in high spirits. He liked patrol duty with Nellie, his little mare, for Nellie was more than a mount, she was a pal, and they would cover the miles in silent comradeship and ask nothing better.

But to-day, beside the ride and the glorious spring morning, he was going north to the Saskatchewan River, and on the bank of those broad waters was Bill Bradley's homestead; and there also dwelt Lucy Bradley, his sister. "Toddle along, old girl," the Mountie patted the mare's neck, "and never mind the crows—they won't hurt you any. Come north to mate the lucky beggars. Who wouldn't be a crow?" From which the reader will be able to judge fairly accurately the state of Tommy Smith's mind.

So north they travelled, Tommy Smith and his Nellie mare, mile after mile through gently rolling prairie. For the first six miles out of Gopherburg, the road was well graded and bordered with patent fencing or barbed wire on either side. The country was thickly settled and farm house followed farm house—frame buildings simple of design, and in appearance synchronizing with the characters of their owners. That is to say, some were painted, some were not. Some had good, serviceable gates, some

miserable excuses made of barbed wire. Some had neat yards around them, others looked as if they had been hit by a cyclone.

From six to twelve miles from town, cultivated farms became more scattered, with vacant, unfenced land between. And from twelve miles north to the river widely separated homesteads had the territory to themselves.

The road changed also, for from the tolerably well kept grade—the work of statute labour, it lapsed into a trail showing little of man's handiwork, and finally into untouched prairie sod, or a rough-hewn wagon way through brush where a bluff occupied the line. For the line itself never changed. It was north, due north, as near as the surveyors and their transits could make it.

North of the river, civilization came to an end altogether. From that point northward to the north pole, there was nothing but three zones: the balance of the treed "Canadian", the barren "Hudsonian", and the "Arctic". Oh, yes, and the denizens thereof—Indians, Eskimos and wild beasts.

Smith knew these things as he faced north and, though really indifferent to the vast expanse ahead of him, occasionally there flashed through his mind the sub-conscious realization that here man and his works ended. It is a frontier thought, and will not be denied. "Oh, to hell with the North Pole!" the policeman muttered, dismissing it, "and hurry, Nellie, I haven't seen her for a month—so you needn't get jealous."

He was welcomed by Bradley at the log stable, and care of the mare was his first consideration. For Nellie was fussy and liked her water freshly

pumped, and her oats served daintily by her master.

In appearance, the homestead was a fair type of hundreds of others on the outskirts of civilization. The shack was rough logs, on side, dove-tailed at the corners, and plastered between, with a sod roof. The yard was fenced with barbed wire strung on willow posts which, while often crooked, have two redeeming features: they resist decay and cost nothing. At the back door, there was an ample supply of stove-wood neatly stacked and by the wire gate, ready to be hauled in to town, two long piles of white-poplar cord-wood. A carefully hoed patch in one corner testified to the garden to-be, whence, in due course, would appear—if the frost did not get them—potatoes, cabbage, beets, string beans and sundry other needs of the table. In the shack's south windows might be seen geraniums and patience plants blooming contentedly in their tin cans. Yes! on the whole, there was a sense of orderliness. And abundant evidence of poverty.

"Now come over to the shack," Bradley invited, "and we'll get a bite to eat. The Missus will have something to show you."

So the baby had to be viewed and fitting praises sung, whereas, as everybody knows, the early stage of a human being is red, noisy and inclined to baldness, and the less said about it the better—that is, if truth amounts to anything.

As a matter of fact, the Mountie, with Lucy Bradley's blue eyes upon him, took the wee mite in his arms "to see how heavy she was". But poor Mrs. Bradley's heart was in her mouth and with a wan smile she took it back again, doing her best not

to snatch. She had suffered too much to have her dear one's head roll off an inexperienced arm and break at the neck—the nightmare of young mothers.

O women of the world! remember the frontier mothers in your prayers: a doctor, if time and weather permit; a neighboring woman by way of nurse! Sometimes a husband in lieu of both. And many a time not even a husband. To those living in cities, it must be hard to realize that such things can be, but poverty, long distances and impassable trails are the contributing causes. Or, more correctly, possibly, it is a combination of circumstances over which nobody has control. The doctors themselves, good fellows, have never failed the poor or shirked the hardships of the winter trail.

The policeman was too well known to the family to cause the stiffness of "company manners", so the meal of fried pork and eggs, and home-canned fruit, washed down with the inevitable tea, was a happy one.

Later, Bradley and his wife exchanged glances and departed, the one to his field work, and the other to put the baby to sleep in the lean-to bedroom.

"Lucy, do you see that?" said the Mountie, pointing to the corporal stripe.

"It's a fine uniform," the girl replied.

"I don't mean the uniform, I mean the stripe."

"It's very grand."

"And you'll say 'yes' now, won't you?"

"Will it support a wife, Tommy?" Lucy countered, blushing.

"Well, of course, it's hardly affluence—" he began, and her laughter interrupted the extenuating circumstances.

"And I've something to show you, Corporal Smith," and going to a drawer she returned holding out a clenched fist. Of course, the hand had to be seized and the fingers gently pried open.

"A nugget!" The policeman's face flushed with annoyance. "Dago' Pete?"

"Yes, Pete; and I don't care to have my friends misnamed."

"I meant nothing, Lucy, by the name—everyone uses it. But you must know he is not normal and, at times, unaccountable for his actions. It would worry me to think he might be hanging around."

"Then you can spare your worrying because he's as gentle as a child. You're jealous, Tommy Smith, jealous of a poor fellow who means no harm."

"You didn't have to take his nugget!"

"And I didn't want to, but his heart was set on it: 'him only small,' he said, 'but if him as big as my fist, I give him just the same'." Her blue eyes were looking through the shack window out into the distance.

"You're a good girl, Lucy, and maybe you are right. I'm only a man—and I love you."

As a matter of fact, Lucy was right and wrong. She was, truly enough, as safe with Pete as with her brother; but that he worshipped the girl with all the intensity of his passionate nature, he alone knew. Poor Pete!

At the moment, however, a less humble lover was by the girl's side, determined to settle the question of ownership of her winsome person once and for all—but desperately uncertain as to the best method of attack. "Would you take a nugget from me, Lucy, if I offered you one?" he hazarded.

"Why, of course I would—if you wanted me to."

"Then shut your eyes tight—tight now! play fair! and put our your left hand."

Laughing, she did as directed, and Tommy Smith, having pulled the gold signet ring from his little finger, slipped it adroitly and safely home. Lucy realized her plight all too late, for encircling arms were around her and her lover's eyes were looking into her own, begging permission—but waiting. And Lucy surrendered, and raised her soft lips to his.

* * *

News travels swiftly, no less in the outlying regions of Man's habitations than in his crowded thoroughfares. Let there be but a breath of scandal and it carries like the plague; a gold strike in an out-of-the-way gulch and the fortunate prospector must race to beat the tidings to the Recorder's office.

So it came about that Pete's nugget was causing a mild sensation in Gopherburg that evening, in spite of the fact that Corporal Smith was still on his patrol duty miles from town; that the Bradleys had not left the homestead; and that none of the immediately interested—including Pete himself—would have spoken of it anyway.

But one nugget does not make a gold strike any more than one swallow makes a summer and the sensation was rather a matter of laughing incredulity at a fluky find than the avaricious excitement of a gold strike. The thing was a joke. No one but a crazy man would pan the Saskatchewan river. Very likely—the suggestion of some—he had owned it for years and the rumour that he got it there rubbish. And in the middle of the argument, so to speak, who

should turn the corner at the Post Office than Pete himself.

"Hi! Pete!" someone called, and in thirty seconds he was the embarrassed center of a group of men anxious to be entertained.

Man, in groups or mob formation, is crueler than Man, the individual; and while any of Gopherburg's male townsmen here assembled would have risked his life on a thirty below zero winter's night to search for an unfortunate lost in the blizzard, or would have dipped deep into his pocket at almost any time in the name of charity, now, encouraged by numbers, they were willing to josh their victim. Maybe cruelty is too severe a word, and it were more charitable to call it thoughtlessness.

"They say you got a nugget, Pete?" It was "Squirrel" Munroe who started it.

Pete squirmed, but smiled ingratiatingly, not wishing to offend. "No—I didn't," he hedged.

"Didn't what?" Squirrel questioned.

"Say I got him."

"But did you?"

Defiantly, "Ya."

Luke Fenwick, who worked in the livery stable, took up the persecution. "Say, fellows! He says he got one! Where'd yer get it, Pete?"

There were laughing faces all round him. Pete made to push through, but the group closed in front.

"Where'd yer get it?" Luke tormented. "Don't yer hear?"

"The 'Saskatch'." The smile had left his face now—he was getting angry.

"'Saskatch'!" Luke mocked, to a general titter. "Give us somethin' else!"

"How?" snapped the Galician. "I say 'Saskatch'! You say 'No'!" His eyes were flashing with anger. A tall man in dirty overalls crossed the road swiftly and elbowed his way to close behind the excited little foreigner. Pete continued, his arms waved above his head. "Suppose I ask you! What you give for that coat? You say, 'thirty dollars'. I say 'No'!—I'm a DAM FOOL!"

The point was well made and the crowd laughed with him—but Pete was past that sort of thing now. His maniacal anger was passing swiftly to maniacal despair—and the passionate eyes dimmed to misery. His right hand crept inside his coat. Then it flashed upward, poised for the stroke, "Life's too weariness!" But another hand reached up, caught the wrist in iron clasp and plucked the knife from the clinging fingers. It was the tall man in dirty overalls, and the words he said to the would-be suicide, so softly that no one else might hear, were gentle as a woman's: "No, Pete—*no*, I say".

The character now "met up with"—as they say out west—enters further into this story; and here would be a suitable place to inform the reader concerning him. He stood six feet one inch in his socks and, as already stated, wore dirty overalls: never, in fact, wore anything else. His frame was—or once must have been—that of an athlete and his face must once have been handsome, but self-indulgence, specifically drink, had left its unmistakable signs. He was married to a squaw and lived on the outskirts of the town in a miserable shack with their ten or twelve children. It was Frankie Lewis who gave these facts to the bank manager next morning, and his explanation respecting this uncertainty was: "They

run in and out like a lot of little pigs—and you simply can't count 'em, Mr. Long." He—we return to him of the overalls—had dissipated in the past sixteen years three separate legacies in the neighbourhood of \$40,000 each, bequeathed to him in England and, had not the supply of aunts failed, would assuredly have continued to so order his life. At 24 years of age he had been an M.D. of London. That was sixteen summers past. His name was Montague Fitzgerald. He was now Gopherburg's town scavenger.

And it was *this* man who put his arm around "Dago" Pete's shoulders and led him gently away; who, out of his own great store of wisdom and misery, found words of peace for the troubled soul.

CHAPTER XI.

PRACTICAL POLITICS

MR. SAMUEL THURSTON was sitting at his desk thinking. His elbows rested on the arms of his chair and his finger tips pressed together. Occasionally, and this was when the train of thought took a particularly pleasing path, the hands were rubbed as of one washing; but the more intense attitude of "here's the steeple" was the rule.

The desk before him was clear of all encumbrances save blotter-pad, ink pot and pens, and this was the more remarkable since most lawyers—even many very capable ones—keep their desks in a deplorable litter of letters, books and miscellaneous rubbish. They appear to think better "professionally" in this confusion. Thurston, it may be remembered, called himself a "business man"; and the suggestion occurs that here may be the means of a simple classification, that "professional" lawyers have their desks all cluttered up, and the "business" lawyers keep them neat and tidy.

The man before us did one thing at a time and one only; and concentrated upon that free from confusion and be-muddling outside influences. If he desired to make an entry in one of his books or to consult a file of letters, his stenographer brought the book or file from its place in the fire-proof vault, and

in due course returned it to its allotted space. What else did he keep her for! And Miss Gregory, under his careful training, had become almost as methodical as himself. Occasionally he would check her up, would ask for the carbon copy of some particularly important letter and, when it was instantly brought, would glance over it long enough to re-assure himself, and hand it back with a "Thank you, Miss Gregory, please re-file."

This morning he was expecting a caller and the time thus devoted to thought was not being expended wastefully; in fact, far from it being "pipe dreams", it was the essence of business—a matter of dollars. Thurston was thinking in terms of white spruce—not at its present worth, but what he shrewdly foresaw would be its worth in the future. In the meantime, just what did he want? What should he demand? How far dare he go?

Miss Gregory knocked, and admitted the caller: "The Honorable Reginald Farley," she announced and quietly closed the door.

"Ah! Farley, my dear fellow," the lawyer greeted, rising, bowing and extending his hand. "Responsibility sits lightly upon you, I see. You get younger with the years."

Farley smiled. "I keep pretty fit, thanks; and how are you and your daughter?"

"Both well, I thank you—a fine girl, Sybil, and I am proud of her, Farley."

"Yes, indeed."

The Minister realized that it was he who, having sought the interview, must broach the subject. The other would wait on him indefinitely. "And how is the local situation?"

"Oh! tolerably well in hand, I think, but requires watchfulness, you know." The inference, of course, being that he, the speaker, was the faithful watch-dog.

"Yes. I realize that we shall need your best endeavours. In the outlying polls, your organization is invaluable."

They smiled reminiscently of the last election, when a ballot box arrived from a remote poll stuffed with a never-to-be-explained assortment of Government votes; whilst another ballot box, undesirable as to its contents, came to grief at the ford. The driver just saved his life, and the Saskatchewan river nearly got the horse and rig. But it *kept* the ballot box!

It was to assure himself of Thurston's loyalty—to be able to count on the man's assistance in the coming election—that the Honorable Farley was here to-day; and, since a reader unfamiliar with such matters might stamp Thurston as a crook, and place the Minister in the same class, some explanation is necessary on the latter's behalf.

The Hon. Reginald Farley was not a crook in a personal sense—he was a politician; and for such, the same excuse holds good as for poets: they are born, not made. His father and grandfather before him had been in The Game; and even the women-folk of the family, year in and year out, talked and thought politics. Now the Farley family were brainy and it is fair to suppose that, had they devoted as much time to their own affairs as to those of their country they would have been equally successful from a monetary standpoint, or even more so. In which case, it is scarcely fair to condemn men of this stamp as crooks. Their methods are not honest! it is

suggested. True, within limits, reasonable limits; but party needs come first. You would countenance underhand methods to win an election? asks the purist. But the dyed-in-the-wool politician does not catechise his soul thus closely in ethical detail. Politics is politics! It is all part of The Game!

Thurston, however, was a bird of a different feather. The Game did not appeal to him except to keep his wits in practice—and for what there was in it for him. He was "a business man"!

"I shall be needing a little assistance myself, Farley," he announced, with half closed eyes.

His visitor flinched imperceptibly. He had realized when he sought the interview that there might be some question of price, but the party could not afford to let this seat "flop over", and Thurston's support was the pivot. "Why, anything I can do, of course. We are not ungrateful to our friends."

"I'm thinking of increasing my timber holdings on the Saskatchewan."

Farley smiled. "Good gracious, man! I thought we had fixed that. You own everything within reach north of the river now, don't you?"

"Ah! *north* of the river! That's the point, Farley. The key to my holdings, I've decided, is the ford and the half section this side for the mill, yardage and so on. There's some nice spruce on the place, too." He said the words indifferently.

Farley's heart missed a beat or two, and then began to race. He was not quite sure, but he feared the man's price was high—dangerously high. "To just what half-section do you refer?"

Thurston gave the numbers, section, township and

range, and Farley got up, consulted a district map hanging on the wall, and returned to his seat.

"Now come, Thurston," he tried to speak easily, "you have timber enough, surely! How would the Senate appeal to you? There are vacancies occurring every now and again, as you know. What do you think?"

The lawyer permitted himself the luxury of leaning back in his swivel chair and giving the proposal a moment's consideration. A Senatorship was really not to be sneezed at; and Sybil might like it, too! She would be spoken of as "a daughter, you know, of Senator Thurston". Bah! all that could come later—well enough for his old age. One thing at a time was his motto. He must not be turned from his purpose.

"Thanks, Farley, but for the present, no! I want that half-section," his jaws snapped, "and I'm going to have it!"

"Good God, man, you can't—you know you can't. It's Bradley's homestead and pre-emption!"

Thurston shrugged his shoulders.

"Have you tried buying it?" The thought had occurred to Farley that this was an easy way out and explained further. "Offered, you understand, to make it worth his while to abandon?"

"Yes. I had him approached—for obvious reasons by a stranger—and he refused cash offers up to \$2,000. Wouldn't sell at all. The fellow's as obstinate as a mule."

Farley felt more hopeful. After all, he could not for the life of him see where he or his government could be placed in a difficult position in a matter of this sort. However much Thurston might want it,

the homesteader was in possession. "Then what can I do?" he asked.

"Excuse me, Farley, I am forgetting my hospitality." He reached down to the second drawer on the right-hand side of his desk and produced a box of very excellent cigars. Indicative of his methodicalness in all things, it may here be stated that another box of far less excellent cigars reposed in the second drawer on the left-hand side. "Try one of these—they are passable, I think." He struck a match for his guest, and continued. "I want you to see to it that the timber and filing rights on Bradley's homestead and pre-emption are *reserved* for my nominee. And protection should anything *slip up*."

Farley pondered it for a moment. "That's all right. But even your nominee cannot file with Bradley in possession."

"Admitted!"

"And you say he won't consent to abandon?"

"No—the fool!"

"Then how are you going to get him off?"

"Why, as to *that*, Farley," Thurston was smiling evilly, "the Lord will provide!"

The Minister could have struck the political jackal before him. It was bad enough that the exigencies of The Game necessitated having truck with them, but as a God-fearing man, one who in reverence took his wife and children to church on Sundays, there were limits to his patience. "I see no necessity, Thurston, for blasphemy. Please let us confine our conversation to practical politics."

"Practical politics! Excellent, Farley, excellent! And for my part, I ask nothing better." These fellows amused him with their subtle distinctions

between right and wrong; their veneer of righteousness to cover mis-deeds. To gain their ends they would condone anything short of murder; and bribery was their stock in trade. Assuredly, they made him laugh! "Then you will look after the details mentioned?"

"I have promised to do so."

"Then that's that." He threw off the mantle of business, and assumed that of goodfellowship. "We dine at 7 o'clock. May we have the pleasure of your company?"

"Thanks, Thurston, for your invitation, but I am booked to catch the noon train." They shook hands. The bargain had been struck.

Thurston leaned back for a minute. He could afford to laugh, for his plans were now all laid—the thing should be as easy as pie. He called his stenographer. "Please take a letter: Jake Skelton, Gopherburg Post Office. Dear Sir," he dictated, "I have taken the preliminary steps in connection with foreclosure of the Knutson mortgage in accordance with the instructions contained in your letter 7th ultimo, but I have received his advices that he will not consider giving a quit claim in your favour in settlement. I think it would be best that we should discuss the matter further before proceeding. Please call at your convenience. That will be all, Miss Gregory."

Meantime, the Hon. Reginald Farley had descended the stairs to the sidewalk and was wending his way thoughtfully back to the hotel. "A jackal—! that's what Thurston was. A political jackal hanging around for scraps—and yapping. Oh! why couldn't The Game be played without these parasites?

Cleanly! The thing gave one a nasty taste in one's mouth—he was acutely aware of it right now." He put up his hand to the offending organ, where it came in contact with the cigar gripped savagely and unconsciously between his teeth. He took it out and looked at it in surprise. Now he remembered—the jackal had given it to him. Ugh! and he pitched it in disgust—half at least of a very excellent cigar—out into the gutter.

CHAPTER XII.

REX III AS CUPID

HERE are days when to stay indoors and work appears a sin against Nature and man's instincts and upon this lovely May afternoon, Long positively could not deny the call for another minute. He was going out, out into the sunshine, and as for the work —he stuffed it into his desk drawer and ran down the bank steps.

He had made for the depot and walked the ties past the brick-red tin-covered grain elevators, thence eastward to the first intersecting north and south trail, where he struck south.

It was part of his job to keep in close touch with the agricultural community; to have knowledge of the methods followed not only in a general way, but by the individual farmers. To one man, a loan of \$100 would require careful thought, and be made not without misgivings; to another a loan of \$2,000 would require no thought at all. The difference between the two was largely a matter of farming ability and management, success and non-success, and judgment to govern in such cases must be based on personally acquired data.

About two miles south, he passed a particularly neat place; a painted frame house, good fences, clean yard, a large barn and implement shed, all bore

witness to efficiency; while shrubs to the front and a wind-break of trees on the north side promised a sense of comfort and character in the owner. It is not to be wondered, therefore, that Long, spying the individual himself near the fence, left the road and sauntered over.

"Nice day," Long hailed him.

The farmer glanced up from his hoeing and grinned. "It's all of that."

"How's seeding coming?"

"Oh! kind of slow—frost not yet all out in the low spots—but no hurry."

"No," Long agreed, "no use putting it in when the land's cold—forty per cent germinates—the rest rots."

The hoer walked over to the barbed wire, tool in hand, and rested an elbow on a fence post. "And who might you be?"

"Name's Long."

"You'll be the new bank manager, then?"

"Yes."

"I'm Jim Biggar," passing a soil begrimed hand over the wire.

"You have a nice place."

"Yes, Mr. Long, and the oats on that field last year," he pointed to where the stubble showed in the distance, "ran 110 bushels to the measured acre."

"Pretty hard to beat that."

"It can't be beat, sir, but we're too far north for corn."

The bank manager had him placed now—a middle west American with good farming bred in his bones. "But why worry?" he asked, and there was mischief in his eyes.

"Oh, I dunno—but my old Dad used to say: 'Jim, my boy, if you ever find yerself in a place that won't raise corn—you'll be a long way from home'."

Long put out his hand in parting. "If we any of us stopped to think, Mr. Biggar, we're all a long way from home. See you again some of these days."

"Apt to—I haven't sold my grain yet, and I'm coming in on Saturday to borrow five hundred."

"Or more—if you want it," and Long, smiling to himself, strode on down the trail.

But this afternoon was not one for material things, oats, corn—that could not be grown—or bank loans, but of sunshine, spring butterflies and joyfulness. It was for these that he had pushed work into his desk drawer and played truant in country lanes.

As he walked, not a thing escaped his attention: birds newly returned from warm southern climes, crows, robins, juncos, blue birds and meadowlarks, hibernating butterflies, tortoise-shells and anglewings and newly emerged dwarf forms, sulphurs and blues; dragonflies, stout-bodied *libellulines* already reddening with maturity, and blue and black damselflies fragile as their name implies. "The gauzy-winged dragonflies swoop and dart," he muttered, "part, no—apart." He looked round for something to sit on and a prairie boulder—relic of the glacier age—appeared the very thing. He pulled out from his pocket an old envelope and pencil and wrote down that which came—the promptings of the subconscious mind. Then he read over his lines two or three times to commit them to memory and, satisfied with the result, continued his way southward.

"Cap" Marsden prided himself on his well-bred cattle and his well-made gates, and Long now left

the road with the intention of inspecting the one while resting his arms on the other. The gate selected was not the entrance to the house and farm buildings, but just a casual one into a pasturage meadow and, opposite the gate, and possibly some two hundred feet distant, was a large slough.

Now the first thing that caught Long's attention was Rex III, the undisputed monarch of Marsden's herds. He was advancing, head lowered, towards the slough—cautiously, as one creeps up on wild ducks—and pawing the ground impatiently as he went. Then the object of the bull's attention came into focus. *It* was down on the edge of the slough, absorbed in its work—a girl with a butterfly net.

Among the many qualifications of a bank manager, the finer technique of the toreador has, so far, been omitted, and Long's course of action was necessarily crude. He vaulted the gate and ran straight for the butterfly net. Within fifty feet of the girl he shouted, "Look out! Give me the net," and had grabbed it out of her hand almost before she realized her danger. "Run—the gate," ordered her rescuer, and himself swung towards the bull, waving the net.

Rex III was rather peeved. The interruption confused him, and he wasted at least three valuable seconds deciding that the waving green thing was his true goal; then he spun on his toes as only a thoroughbred Ayreshire can, and put his heart into it. But Long was some sprinter, too, and his course was a semi-circle; that is, he started at a right angle to the line, slough to gate, swung gradually fencewise until he saw the girl climb the barrier to safety, and then swung once more for the gate. The bull, however, gentleman as his pedigree proclaimed him, was not

playing quite fair—he was cutting his corners! And since a dead heat at the gate was, from Long's point of view, a thing most to be avoided, he, too, practised finesse. He gave the net a final wave, and hurled it thirty feet back from the gate and safety.

The girl who had been thus rescued was one of character and courage, but to be snatched from death herself and then see the strange young man who had done the deed first race a bull neck and neck, and then land sprawling at her feet, was a combination of circumstances hard on the nerves, to say the least of it.

Long got up, brushed some of the dust off his blue serge suit with his hands, and smiled. "Not hurt, I hope—are you?" he asked. "Sorry I had to part with your net." Then he saw the distress in her face, and deliberately misunderstood it. "But I'm going to get it back again in a minute or two."

"No, no, no—you're not! It's not the net, you goose." Long had adopted the best course, and her sense of humour was coming to the rescue. "It's you!"

"Me? Why it's the first time I've ever done that."

"Surely not?" she was smiling through her tears now.

"Yes, and I make it a rule never to pass up an opportunity to do a thing once."

"Why?"

"Then I know how to in case of need."

"I want to thank you, but I don't even know your name. Mine's Peggy Bolton, and I only came here yesterday."

"I only arrived recently myself, but if you won't promise *not* to thank me, I won't tell you my name."

"Oh—"

"Promise, I say."

"All right."

"James Long. I'm manager of a bank in Gopherburg." He raised his hat and, smiling, they shook hands as formally as if they stood on a cement sidewalk. Then they turned to the gate.

Rex III was still with his vexation. In the interim he had never left it, never taken his blood-shot eyes off it, in fact, but why wouldn't the pesky thing move? Just give one little flap, some excuse, however poor, for him to leap in and rend it!—tear at it with his horns and trample it under foot.

Long was the first to speak. "Thank goodness, he hasn't touched it."

"Why—what difference would that make?"

"Spoil it! I'm going to get it for you in a minute."

"No! I say, no! You shan't! Oh, *please!*"

"Now, don't be absurd, Miss Bolton. He's brave but, intellectually, vastly our inferior. Would you expect me to leave him master of the situation? with *our* net! Besides, I've never done this before. Please help me to find a stone."

"He won't go even if you do throw a stone at him."

"I don't remember saying that he would." He turned onto the graded trail, head down in search.

But in a district where the black loam is two feet deep, stones are as rare as angle-worms; that is, about the only source of supply is importation.

Peggy Bolton solved the difficulty. "Would an iron nut do?" she asked.

"Fine! Simply fine!" Long took the offering and returned with her to the gate. Here he pulled

out his handkerchief, and knotted the weight in one corner. Then he addressed Rex III. "Hi, you bull! never mind that. Look at this, see—white and waving!" Rex III saw it and turned, advancing slowly. His tormenter persevered until the bull desired but one thing—to destroy it, tear and destroy. Then Long hurled it far out into the field.

To vault the gate and return with the net was an easy matter. He then handed it to its owner. "And now please tell me what you were doing at that slough?"

"Catching dragonflies. Oh! and they are wonderful—northern forms I have never seen alive before: *L. borealis* and *hudsonica* and beautiful little *coenagrionis* I don't even know the name of—but, of course, you wouldn't understand."

"No," said Jimmy Long.

So they started back for town together. Long learned that Peggy, who belonged east, had been to school with Sybil Thurston and, having completed a natural science course and received an invitation from Sybil to visit her simultaneously, had gladly accepted the latter. The opportunity to study unfamiliar dragonflies in the new North West was not to be declined! "He could appreciate that—couldn't he?"

Since it brought her here, he appreciated it very much, but all he said was: "Why—of course. And when did you say you arrived?"

"Only yesterday, but I had to get out this sunny afternoon and have a first look at them. Miss Thurston told me to 'go to it'. She isn't interested in dragonflies herself."

"It is a little unusual," her companion agreed.

"And now I'm here and all among them, I realize that I am going to have a difficult time."

"With an unsympathetic bull as part of the landscape?"

"That was a rude interruption."

"I apologize!"

"I meant the bull's," she corrected, laughing. "But don't you *see*, the species here are altogether different!"

"That was largely what induced you to come here, I understood you to say."

"Yes, I know, but I thought I could identify them from what I knew—book knowledge."

"That does let one down at times! But haven't you any literature on the subject?"

"Oh, yes—some. But there is no comprehensive work covering the North American fauna—just local lists. The best I have is a leaflet, 'The Prairie Dragonflies'."

"Sounds as if it ought to help."

"Yes, but whoever wrote it presupposes you *know* them all—just gives localities and seasons."

"The goat!"

"And he doesn't even give his name."

"How careless of him! How would that help?"

"I might write to him."

"M'yes. But if you know some of the what-you-may-call-ums positively, and other thing-um-a-jigs more or less from what you've read, why not use the goat's leaflet for what it is worth?"

"How, man—how?" Peggy was an enthusiast, and, while she secretly resented such names applied to her beloved dragonflies, she was ready for any assistance the male mind might suggest.

"You say he gives 'seasons' and 'localities'—then expect to find spring ones in the spring, and in the places he says they haunt. Sort out the ones you know, and you should get pretty close to spotting the others, by—elimination."

The girl looked at him quickly. His direction was practical—the scientific one. But Jimmy Long's face showed nothing—a Sphinx-like negative.

"Thank you, Mr. Long, for your suggestion. Elimination does promise a solution. I think you're very bright." She produced her afternoon's catch and, extracting a large *Leucorrhinia borealis*, held it up for him to look at. Then, laughingly, "and what would you call that?"

"I'd call that a Hereford."

"Go up top," she applauded, "it's named *leucorrhinia* for its white face."

"Then I hit it pretty close, didn't I?"

"Very close, indeed."

Passing a field that had been in summer fallow, they came upon six baby gophers out on the edge of the road allowance, basking in the sun. They were too young to even know fear, so just rolled on their backs and squealed. Peggy uttered an exclamation of delight and sat down beside them. So Long placed them, two at a time, into her lap and, as he rolled in the last couple, sheer joy in life, the sunshine and the girl's comradeship made him for once forget himself. Said he, smiling at the squealing babies:—

"Sing hot for the Summer, and joyous hours,
The nesting birds, and picture flowers
In meadow and verdant lane:
For gauzy-winged dragonflies swoop and dart;
The butterflies kiss all the buds apart—
And the fairies are here again."

The girl looked at her companion, amazed, the baby gophers forgotten. "Who wrote that?"

"Oh!" miserably, "I don't know." But for once, his face betrayed him.

"You *do* know. You wrote it. When?"

Sullenly: "This afternoon. It's nothing."

She kissed each baby gopher on the back of its neck and returned them to their mother earth. Then she put up her hands. "I have cramps in my feet from sitting on them. Please!" He helped her up, and they continued their walk homeward.

The girl was the first to speak. "The trouble with souls," she said, with wrinkled brow, "is that they are isolated—each dwelling within its own aura." The idea amused her, and she smiled. "I thought that you were too commercial to really appreciate nature, and I find—forgive me—that you have the mind of a poet."

"Forget it—please!" Long had himself well in hand once more. "It's not likely to occur again."

"No—I think I understand."

They parted at the outskirts of the town, for Peggy must here swing eastward to the Thurston residence. She offered him her hand and smiled at him—and Jimmy took it. There is not a shadow of a doubt that he held it longer than custom demands. It was, in fact, a caress rather than a shake and a faint flush in Peggy's cheeks accompanied its withdrawal, but the eyes were still smiling adorably—surely no reproof! And, for the rest, why not? They were free, white, and twenty-one, and it was springtime.

* * * * *

When Jimmy Long undressed that night preparatory to going to bed, he took from a very personal book-case in his bedroom a little bundle of leaflets bearing the title, "The Prairie Dragonflies" and, selecting the top copy for his purpose, he printed in capitals immediately beneath the title: "BY THE GOAT".

Then, smiling, he put his hands on the high rail at the foot of the brass bedstead and vaulted neatly, to land full length in the middle of the springs.

* * * * *

On opening the bank mail the following morning, he received something in the nature of a shock. A letter of credit from an eastern banking house on behalf of Miss Margery Bolton which, while limiting her drawings to two hundred dollars per month "as a matter of formality", intimated that such amount could be exceeded, in case of need, by telegraphic request.

Long shook his head. "She must be worth \$50,000. The last thing I ever pictured myself was a 'petticoat pensioner'. Oh, damn!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A MATTER OF BUSINESS

'T IS said that nothing is sure in this world except death, but if a letter is correctly stamped and addressed, it is reasonably certain that it will reach its destination in due course. It follows, then, as a natural sequence, that the letter dictated by Mr. Samuel Thurston to one, Jake Skelton, and correctly stamped and addressed by his well-trained stenographer, Miss Gregory, duly reached the hands of the addressee.

As a matter of fact, it was Jake Skelton's son, Bud, who, having come into town for repairs for the seeder at his father's bidding, called at the Post Office for the mail, and took this particular letter home along with the other contents of the family box—being chiefly newspapers a week or so old, and advertisements for patent medicines.

Jake Skelton had received in the past envelopes bearing in the top left-hand corner the printed instructions to "Return in five days to Box 24". He did not like them for good reasons of his own; among which was the power they had, even unopened, to create a loathsome dread—a shaky feeling at the knees. But, surely, even that was no excuse why this innocent business letter should necessitate the string of blasphemy with which its contents were received.

He was seeding near the gate when Bud returned home and pulled up his horses to take his son's offering. It was there, on the iron seat of the seeder, that he read the lawyer's letter. Followed the string of blasphemy aforementioned, and the whip lash across his horses' backs. "Get on to hell with yer—yer beasts!" he said. "What the hell are yer standin' there for!" Which was obviously illogical and unfair.

It was about 11 o'clock the following day that Mr. Samuel Thurston called upon the efficient Miss Gregory to produce the carbon copy of his letter to the worthy Jake and, having glanced at it, ostensibly to ascertain its date, he gave the stereotyped instructions: "Thank you, Miss Gregory, please re-file," and handed it back.

Mr. Thurston was always polite to his stenographer. She was so capable and methodical, the very realization of what a stenographer should be—and one, incidentally, most damnably hard to replace. Some of these days, he must raise her salary, next Christmas, say, from \$50 to \$55.

Ah! here she is again! "Mr. Jake Skelton," she announced, and quietly closed the door. Miss Gregory always closed the door, and always did so quietly. It was part of her training.

Mr. Thurston did not get up to greet his visitor; in fact, the oily effusiveness extended to the Hon. Reginald Farley was altogether absent. He contented himself with indicating the chair across the desk and smiling grimly.

Jake Skelton took the chair, but his brow was dark and he overlooked uncovering his head.

"Why not remove your hat, Skelton," the lawyer corrected him, "and make yourself comfortable?"

"Comfortable be damned, Thurston!" But he snatched off the offending hat and pitched it away heedless of direction.

"So you received my letter?" the lawyer smiled.

"Yes."

"Well, we must decide how to proceed. As I explained, Knutson will not accommodate us by giving a 'quit claim' in satisfaction of your mortgage, so I am afraid there is no alternative but to foreclose by legal process."

"We knew that damn well from the first, and it was fixed to foreclose."

"Tut, tut, Skelton, we appear to be a little warm this morning. Business, my dear fellow, must be discussed calmly and agreeably."

"If," said his thoroughly exasperated visitor, "you would have the goodness to tell me why you wrote that letter?"

"Sure, the mortgage—"

"It ain't true, Thurston, and you know it. You wanted to see me. What is it?"

"Jake Skelton, you grieve me," responded his tormentor. "Such crudity is grieving, and business—" He bit off his own words, and the smiling face was transformed to imperious severity, "and don't you *dare* to raise your voice again!"

Skelton shrank back as if his own cruel whip had been lashed across his cheeks. "Then what is it, Mr. Thurston?" He was subdued, and the words at worst were only sulky.

"That is better!" The lawyer approved, and his finger tips were brought together into their "here's

the steeple" position, denoting mental tranquility.

"I'm listening," Skelton reminded him.

"Yes." Thurston reached to the second drawer on the left-hand side of his desk and handed the open cigar box across the table. "You will smoke?" he ordered—and smiled.

Jake took a cigar and, biting off the end savagely, lighted it.

"It's like this, Skelton. I own, as you know, considerable timber across the river—very valuable timber I think it will be some day—but my position could be much improved by my owning a block this side not only for the additional spruce on it but for the land for mill, yardage and so on."

"Then you want to get my place?" inquired the surprised Skelton.

"Oh, dear, no! Your spruce is mostly cut, and you are not on the river."

"I don't get you."

"Tut, man, you are dull this morning. It's this side of the ford I must have." Thurston raised a warning finger to his lips.

"The Bradley half section?"

"Of course."

"Why see me about that? Buy him off."

"Ah! Skelton, that's where the perversity of man comes in. He won't be bought."

"Then how are you going to get him off?"

"I'm not, Skelton. You are."

At the words the farmer's knees responded to a fear-produced ague, and his mouth dried in anticipation of the sentence to follow. "More dirty work?" he questioned.

"Hush, man! There's nothing to be scared of. No violence—no truck with the man at all."

"Then how is it to be done?"

"Our friend is going to default in his homestead duties, and the pre-emption payments now are hopelessly in arrears."

"But he won't default."

"He'll have to—if he's in jail!"

Skelton could feel himself growing white. "For what?"

"Cattle rustling!"

"Thurston, I won't do it."

"Yes, you will, Jake," the jaws snapped.

"I won't. It 'ud be jail for me for years if I did."

The lawyer smiled. "It will be jail for you for years if you don't!" and he nodded towards the vault.

"The old threat, eh?" the farmer sprang to his feet threateningly.

Thurston never moved a muscle. His words were as even and his lips as smiling as ever. "Don't be silly, Skelton. To murder me, while unpleasant—for me, would do you no good. Now sit down again and calm yourself. In the first place—and you may as well know it—all the papers in connection with those little matters of the past are in that fire-proof burglar-proof vault. Further, they are enclosed in a sealed envelope with directions on the cover over my signature to the effect that in the event of my death the package is to be turned over to the Superintendent of the Mounted Police, Prince Albert."

"You devil!"

"Not *necessarily* so, Skelton. Won't you relight your cigar? No! Then let us continue, or, as the

French say, 'return to our muttons'. You will pardon the digression, I know. I am seldom guilty of it. No, Skelton, I think your term is harsh, for, so far as feeling unkindly towards you in this present transaction, I propose to treat you most generously. In the first place, I have done all the thinking for you in order to make the plan virtually—pray pardon the expression—fool-proof; and it is to all intent without risk. In the second, I propose paying you \$1,000 for any inconvenience in mind or body it may have caused you. And, in the third, upon the matter being successfully concluded, I intend to give myself the pleasure of handing you that package reposing in my vault—you will burn it, if you take my advice."

Jake Skelton sat down again. "What proof have I that you'll do as you say?"

For a moment anger, for the first time in the interview, showed in the lawyer's eyes, but it died down again. "*That* was unworthy of you, Skelton." He meant it literally. "I am a business man—I admit it, and sometimes little schemes are necessary—necessary, that is, to the fulfilment of my plans. But in my business dealings, I am *never*, Skelton, guilty of breaking my promise."

Skelton looked at him in surprise, for even his sluggish brain could detect the sincerity of the rebuke. "Then spill it, Thurston," he invited.

"The thing is beautifully simple. You lose a yearling."

"How?"

"A rifle bullet. Choose a favourable opportunity for that, and use your 'silencer'."

"Next?"

"Again selecting the hour, you take the head, skin and hooves to the south bluff on Bradley's homestead and bury them."

"Then?"

"You *lose* your yearling. That is, you discover its loss and hunt around a bit, and ask a neighbour or two. But not Bradley, mind!" He raised a warning finger.

"What follows?"

"About a week after losing the creature, you find it again—or rather, in hunting for your stray animal you come upon what looks like a burial spot."

"Hell! But what am I doing inside his barbed wire?"

"That's all right. You have looked most everywhere else. His bum two-wire fence isn't yearling proof; and you thought it might be in the heavy bluff."

Skelton passed a grimy palm over his wet brow.
"Do I dig it up?"

"Oh, Skelton!" The lawyer chuckled in silent merriment.

"Damn it! Someone's got to dig it."

"Of course, man, of course—but the police. What do we keep them for?"

"I go in to town and report it, eh?"

"Yes, and don't you say a word to anyone about it between finding the remains and reporting. They will act quickly enough—just leave the rest to them. An excellent body, the Mounted Police!"

"You think Bradley will be put away for that?"

"I'm sure of it."

"Then how do you get the land?"

"With the homestead duties and pre-emption pay-

ments in default, your son, Bud, 'jumps' the place; and, in due course," Thurston glanced in the direction of the vault door, "turns it over to me."

"How do you know that others won't be after it? Someone might get in ahead of Bud."

"I told you, Skelton, that *I* was doing the thinking. But we will not take any chances, naturally. Bud will be in Prince Albert ready to file right on the 'tick' of the default. Until that time, I shall not need to see you again."

Skelton sat there, thinking, but for the life of him he could not find a fault upon which to base a serious objection.

"I think," the lawyer hinted, "that concludes the business." He reached to the left. "Will you have a cigar?"

"No. I'm damned if I will!" Skelton got up and stooped for his hat.

Thurston raised his hands, as of one shocked. "Skelton, in business two things are essential: to keep one's temper—"

"We'll meet in Hell some day!" the farmer interrupted.

"Ah! you induce me to continue; and the other is optimism."

But his victim had gone, slamming the door.

* * * * *

"Optimism?" Samuel Thurston did one thing at a time. Jake Skelton was forgotten with the slamming door, and he was now considering this word he had so recently spoken. "Am I an optimist? No! Not in the weak Mark Tapley sense, 'to make the best of a bad job', to take the kicks and come up

smiling and looking for more. There is no business logic to that—it gets you nowhere."

"Optimism? No, nor in accepting 'half a loaf' when I am after the whole cheese. 'A daughter of Senator Thurston,'" he smiled. "Many would have fallen for that—would have passed up the main issue for the sop and fooled themselves into believing that it was the real goal. I'll *take* that when I want it."

"Optimism?" For the third time, the lawyer repeated the question, his fingers in their favourite position of "here's the steeple". "Yes! I suppose that I do possess it to a superlative degree. To know what you want, to go after it. To get it. Those are the great essentials. And, if you were not sure of yourself—convincingly sure that you could put it across, how would you ever convince the other fellow? I wonder? Yes, that's it. It is the man who goes to the meeting with his resolution written out beforehand who gets it carried. I've gone through life with my resolutions written out ahead. So," his fingers slipped unconsciously and came up into "and here's all the people", "I've fooled them all the time. That's optimism! That's business."

CHAPTER XIV.

WE GO A-FISHING

GROWN men, away from their day's work and its petty annoyances; away from women and their restraining influences, are just boys in their primary instincts. Swimming, gymnastic stunts, fishing, the simple joys of life, are again entered into in precisely the same spirit as "when all the world was young". A woman, sooner or later, reaches a not-to-be-denied stage of maturity; she becomes a "dowager". A man, in his heart, never recognises such a turning point.

So, on this beautiful May morning, we find three men, a red-coated policeman, a black-coated clergyman and a bank manager in shooting ducks, hopping joyously around a primitive automobile, coaxing it to take a proper interest in life; to shake off its cantankerous obstinacy and convey them north with all despatch for their day's fishing. For, whereas the car of to-day eats out of your hand and purrs like a cat, its predecessor of those days barked like a dog and broke its owner's wrist on trifling provocation. This particular car, when it behaved itself, was known to its owner as "Nick" in contradistinction to its perverse moods, when it did nothing of the sort.

They were off at last, laughing, waving cheery greetings to those they passed, and bumping over

culverts. North they travelled, over the road followed by Corporal Smith when his patrol trip took him to Bradley's homestead, and he was the pilot to-day.

Occasionally, after they had passed the limits of graded roads, wet spots would be encountered and it was then a nice question as to whether it would be safer to try to sneak round by the fence, or to rush the water at full speed. Once they got stuck in a "pot-hole" that proved worse than it looked, but an accommodating farmer hitched on with his team and hauled them out—his horses shying and snorting at the new terror that had come into their lives.

At last the Bradley homestead was reached, and here they left the car. The creek ran through his land and they must proceed on foot to where it emptied into the Saskatchewan river.

The fishing party, of course, called at the shack to ask the customary permission, and Tommy Smith introduced his new friends to Mrs. Bradley and Lucy. They were invited to return for the mid-day meal, but the fishermen explained that they were well provided for and, expressing their thanks, went on their way rejoicing.

There is something about fishing strange waters in a new country in the nature of suppressed excitement—a sense of unknown possibilities peculiar to itself! Other forms of sport are exhilarating; hunting the wily goose over its stubble feeding grounds; moose in its woodland haunts, or bear and goat on the mountain side. But you will either get what you are after, or you will not. You will make your shot, or you will miss it. At best, your highest hopes will be fulfilled. There are no mysterious possibilities.

But *fishing* in strange waters. Oh! the joy of it! What may *not* be there—waiting and hungry, in the mystic depths? Tales of sturgeon could be told, of huge triangular dorsal fins rising by the fisherman's side; gigantic fellows twelve feet long and weighing 1,000 pounds. Of monster land-locked salmon snatching at a small trout lure and scaring an astonished mortal out of a year's growth.

Said Long, holding out his arms to check his companions from rushing down to the water's edge; "Let's look at it a minute and see what's stirring. There! see that!—and that!" Circles showed where a fish, rising to the surface and turning down again, had broken the water with its tail.

The creek mouth, where it broadened to empty into the Saskatchewan river, was typical of the prairie provinces. Sedimentary deposits had formed a sand bar forty or fifty feet from the mouth itself, making a deep, still pool which, in turn, narrowed into a neck downstream. Up this neck would come from the river, the small fry seeking sanctuary in the creek; and the larger fish themselves, in their search for food.

"What are you fellows going to try for?" Long asked.

"Goldeyes!" Tommy Smith replied promptly, "down there." He pointed to the neck. Thence, also, ventured the Rev. Dobson.

As for Long, he put together a general utility rod of three joints with agate rings and slipped into the winch fittings a high grade casting reel. He hesitated a moment. One was apt to find a pike or two—and they made a mess of a "phantom" minnow! He selected a silver spoon and shortening the line to

about twenty-four inches, sent the lure flying across the pool to take the water almost without a splash. Now the line was reeled slowly back; but half way across, the winch "sang" with the first wild rush of a pike. The fisherman smiled to himself. He brought it to the bank and gaffed it neatly—about 9 pounds. A few minutes later, he took another, about 7 pounds, and breathed a sigh of relief.

Pike are not esteemed by real fishermen in Canada, for, beyond the first rush, they are poor fighters, and for the table they are distinctly second class. The fact remains, however, that on the prairies, "jack-fish", as they are commonly called, have their value, since in many lakes they are all the water contains.

Long now prepared for something better. He changed the spoon for a small "phantom" minnow and sent it skimming. Once, twice—ah! a savage little tug, and a short run. Pickerel! He brought four to the net, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds apiece. This fish, in Quebec, is known as "doré", in the United States as "the wall-eyed pike" and in English natural history books as "the pike-perch of America". The last name is the most descriptive, since it has perch bars and dorsal fin, a pike-like tail, and a head a combination of the two. It is an excellent table fish.

The fisherman put down his rod and refilled his pipe. He would give the water a rest whilst seeing how the others were getting along.

At the Bradley shack, Smith had borrowed, from where it rested on three nails beneath the eaves, a long bamboo pole. To this he had attached a line of equal length with a cork some twelve inches from the hook. His bait, worms, he had procured the

evening before from a rhubarb patch in a friend's garden; the worms having been imported from Ontario with the rhubarb. It could scarcely be said that he was "fishing", as his methods would not justify the use of that word—"catching fish" is nearer the mark.

Having impaled a worm, he swung the long pole so that the cork flopped into the water well across the neck. The point of the rod now follows it as it is carried along by the current. Bob, bob, undergoes the cork, and the angler, having tightened the line to hook his victim, now hurls it thirty feet above his head into the willow brush behind his back.

"Oh! give 'em a chance, Smith. What have they done to you?" Long came up, smiling.

It was the Rev. Dobson, patiently angling with a piece of meat and a sinker, who made reply. "He says it's the 'Canmore heave'. Can you beat it!"

But Smith had another bite and scorned to reply until he had sent another "goldeye" flashing sky-high above their heads. Then he turned on Long. "The proof of the pudding is in the eating. You come and see what I've got."

There they lay in the shadow of a rock, sixteen silver beauties averaging rather better than a pound. They have large scales and scientifically are close to the shads and herrings. Incidentally, they will rise to a fly, and on a light rod put up a good fight. So Tommy Smith's "Canmore heave" was little short of murder.

"How about lunch under the bank, there?" Long suggested; and they sat and ate it.

From their point of vantage, they saw a deer further down the river walk daintily down to the

edge and breast the swift current to the other side. Then a beaver swam right up the neck of water in front of them, made a landing fifty feet above, gnawed off a willow branch with its chisel teeth, and took its meal downstream again. Tommy Smith clapped his hands and it dived, slapping its tail—but it did not let go of its branch.

"It's beautiful, you know," Long murmured, "this muddy old Saskatchewan, and the limitless expanse of spruce."

"Yes," the policeman replied, laughing. "Nothing between us and the north pole—and no need for a Zoo."

Suddenly the Rev. Dobson bounded to his feet.

"Good gracious, men, just look at my rod!" and raced for where, lodged on a piece of drift wood and held down at the butt by a rock, it was bending double.

Long trotted off for his gaff and Tommy Smith coached from the side line. "Hold him, Parson, hold him! There, that's right. Now give him the 'Can-more heave'."

But it was patent that this fish could not be "heaved". It was making short lunges, coming in on the reel, and then lunging again.

The owner of the gaff returned, smiling. He thought that he knew the signs. "Now reel slowly," he directed, sinking his gaff. "Again, a little more. Look out!" and threw a 10 pound ling high and dry on the beach.

The others subsequently declared that the Rev. Dobson screamed, and, whereas this was pure invention, the only fresh-water representative of the cod fishes would provide a fair excuse. The flat head is

ornamented with a feeler on the chin and the belly is distended to accommodate a liver two sizes too large.

"Is it good to eat?" he who had caught it inquired, mournfully.

"Why, yes—at a pinch. It's a clean feeder—minnows chiefly—but the flesh is solid and requires parboiling."

"Then, Long, you shall have him. I insist. You shall have him for your breakfast."

"Thanks. I'd hate to rob you!" and Long returned to his pool.

He was not satisfied that he had as yet accounted for the fish seen to break water when they had first arrived. It might be a "goldeye", true, and then again it might not be. He changed the small "phantom" bait for a larger one and sent it flying well across. A flash of gold! A short fight, and a 6 pound "Dolly Varden"—the only fish of the trout group in the prairie rivers—was netted and on the bank. He caught three more rather smaller, and moved a piece up the creek to a deep hole under a leaning spruce tree.

The fisherman now changed his methods. Hugging the trunk of the spruce tree to conceal himself, he let out line until the "phantom" minnow nearly reached the water. Then he swung it slowly as far as it would reach downstream and let it sink. When he judged the lure was near the bottom, he drew it back against the current. The line tightened, and jerked savagely, as if a dog were at the other end worrying it. He transferred the rod to his right hand and pried himself away from the tree. Then, keeping his thumb on the reel, he coaxed the fish down the creek to the gaff, never for an instant giving

it its head—the best policy with a large pickerel. Oh, what a monster! He took a spring scale from his creel. The fish weighed 13 pounds—the largest pickerel he had ever caught.

They loaded the Bradleys with fish. Two "Dolly Vardens" for immediate use, the big pickerel to be kept in cold storage down the well, and a score of goldeyes for smoking—and, kippered, the goldeye is a delicacy.

* * * * *

By pre-arrangement, the fishermen returned to Long's house for supper. Their host was preparing pickerel for the pan and Corporal Smith, divested of his red tunic and with a dish-cloth pinned around him, was preparing for culinary arts. Said he, turning to the third member of their expedition: "Dobs, do you think you could set the table?"

"Tommy, I am sure I could."

Thus it came about that intimate friendship between these three men ripened into being, and lasted until the vicissitudes of a new country drove them several ways. Among themselves, the Reverend Philimore Dobson was henceforth "Dobs", whilst christian names sufficed for the other two. But the point worthy of special note is that this latitude of friendship was *only* among themselves, and that in the presence of others every formality was observed. Friendship is a sacred thing, and one not to be abused. To the world in general, and Gopherburg in particular, they represented the Church, Mammon and the Law.

CHAPTER XV.

AN UNDESIRABLE ACQUISITION

“I'M going to quit.”

Long was sitting at his desk writing, and looked up in surprise at “Tootles” Thomas, his junior clerk. “Tootles” was a nice looking boy with dimples in either cheek that any girl might have envied, and he was blushing. “Please say it again, Thomas,” the manager requested, “and say it slow.”

“I want to leave.”

“You mean that you wish to hand in your three months' notice of retirement?” Long corrected.

“Oh, sir, I'm sorry, but I can't stay after Saturday.”

“But your contract calls for three months.”

“Tootles” raised his eyes from the pattern of the carpet. He had nerved himself for this interview, determined to leave, whatever the consequences. “I've got to go, sir,” he affirmed.

“Tell me,” Long invited, kindly, “just what bug has bitten you now?”

“I've a pal—a friend, in Saskatoon, Mr. Long, and—” “Tootles” blurted it out, “—he says we can clean up \$400 a month!”

“In what, Thomas?” but Long knew what was coming.

“In real estate. And he says—”

"Now, stop for a minute, boy, and listen to me. You have been in the bank a couple of years, and you are doing well. If you stay with the service, promotion will come steadily, as you merit it, right through your life; and your salary, all things considered, will compare fairly with any of the professions. At sixty, the Pension Fund will look after you until death. That's a career and a worth-while one for any man with the right stuff in him. Now, the other side of the case! Your friend is coaxing you to jump your job to go into real estate with him with a bait of \$200 a month—"

"No, sir!" "Tootles" interrupted in his excitement, "\$400 a month *each*."

"Oh! Very well, then," Long smiled grimly to himself, "he's holding up as a prize \$400 a month *each*. But what you have to ask yourself, Thomas, is how long will it last—three months? four? six? Let's say until the first snow. Then what is your position? The boom—and I admit that one of the beastly things appears under way—will have burst. You will have made a few hundred dollars in commissions, but, since it came easily, you will have acquired extravagant tastes and spent most of it. Nice plight you're in then, Thomas; appetite for good cigars—and out of a job!"

"But, Mr. Long, it's not only the commissions on sales—it's what we make ourselves."

Long sighed wearily, the more so because he knew that he was wasting his time. But his duty demanded this much of him and, besides, he liked "Tootles". "You mean, Thomas, in personal speculations?"

"Yes, sir!" The greed for money showed all too plainly in his eyes.

"All right! I will tell you about that side of the game. You start in a small way, buying a lot here and there for two or three hundred and sell them again for three or four hundred. You buy again and sell again, until it looks like easy money. You get deeper and deeper in the mire, with payments to meet at three, six and nine months. And you sit up at night figuring on paper how much you are worth."

"Well! I will be worth something, won't I?"

"Certainly, Thomas—on paper. And when the boom bursts, that's all you will have—paper! Agreements for sale calling for payments that you will never make."

"But, sir, you don't have to stay in till then, do you?"

"Why, no, of course not. If you gauge the situation correctly and sell out everything for cash before the clock strikes twelve—everything would be lovely."

"That's what I *should* do," said "Tootles" with conviction.

"Say, Thomas, do you mind my having a good look at you?"

"No, sir—why?" Poor "Tootles" was blushing again.

"Because if you do *that*, you are the only specimen of its kind the world has as yet produced."

But it was all to no purpose; the real estate bug had bitten "Tootles", and the poison was in his veins. Long made the best of it. "All right, Thomas, you must learn your lesson, I see. Better resign to take effect immediately, and jump your job—for that's what it amounts to."

Long had been through real estate booms before—the accursed epidemics of avariciousness that overrun the North American continent from time to time with pestilential breath, and he hated them. City after city, and town after town, would catch the taint, and commencing with a few innocuous looking cases, the plague would spread with increasing virulence, until everyone was smitten. Bank customers highly regarded for their sane business qualities would request loans for gambling in property upon the grounds that the buy was “a money-maker”; that it “couldn’t go wrong”, and threaten, if refused, to take their accounts elsewhere. The disease had them and business sanity, caution and ethics were alike forgotten.

A real estate boom is usually in unimproved land, but while buying vacant lots in the town limits is the commonest form of the disease, there are others equally or even more delirious. One of these is the acquiring of small holdings, say five or ten acre plots, on the outskirts. The Chinese market gardeners who have owned and worked them will usually sell at a price, and possibly seize the opportunity to slip back to China to beget another son. The plot may change hands three or four times, commencing, say, at \$1,500 and ending at \$5,000 or so, when it is ready for the surveyor as a sub-division. A tracing now comes into being from which a flock of blue-prints is produced, and from these, lots are sold by glib-tongued sales-agents, at home or abroad, wherever a fool may be found.

But, compared with the fool who would buy lots in the aforetime Chinaman’s garden, approximately in the town limits, what may be said for him who

buys lots in the larger sub-divisions of 160 to 640 acres situated one to five miles *from* the town limits? It is the larger operators who handle these, and before the boom blows up they frequently become wealthy—on paper. Previous to this, however, in the bustling prosperous era, they manage to live quite “high” for a time, as the crop of suckers is enormous. The Old Country contributes handsomely and, from carefully gathered statistics, the pretty blue-prints with their hundreds of little oblong grave-like divisions are of particular fascination to impecunious clergymen and widows. For, when you come to think of it, it is to the poor, of course, to whom this “easy money” would come in so useful. But they are all smeared with the same brush: the vendor, the gullible purchaser, and the lying salesman. The evil-smelling slop on that brush is *greed*. A rotten business!

Long knew of a case where a townsite, and the land even beyond the town limits, was virtually all owned by two brothers. It had been originally their homesteads and pre-emptions. When a boom came along the brothers had the chance of their lives to sell their holdings at prices increasing steadily as the fever rose to its height; and, as a matter of fact, they did sell and had the money come rolling in. Then they noted with grief that lots they had sold for \$200 were selling at \$600 and \$800 and they kicked themselves for selling too quickly and too cheap. They had not realized at first, they felt, the wonderful possibilities of this thing—this buying and selling of land which went on for ever! So they got back into the game themselves, re-buying at the now fancy prices until their handsome bank accounts were exhausted and from then on upon agreements

for sale. They purchased back for sub-division purposes forty acres of farm land at \$200 an acre, that they had sold six weeks before for \$50 an acre, and paid a surveyor a heavy fee for his labours. They must have been bitten all up the arm and all down the leg, mustn't they, to have acted quite as crazily as that—regularly impregnated with *greed*? As a matter of fact, the disease killed them—financially. They never blamed themselves. It was "something that went wrong with the boom"! It burst!

"Yes," Long called, for someone had knocked at his door.

And in walked, or rather ambled, a florid faced little man of robin-like proportions. He bowed himself into a chair and perched in the attitude permitting the greatest accommodation to the adipose tissue situate the third vest button downwards, viz: straight-backed, thighs at right angles, and hands on knees. "And how is our genial manager this morning?" inquired the caller.

"In robust health, Mr. Lewis, I thank you. And what is the good news to-day?" Long always found Frankie amusing and was ready to enter into the spirit of his conversations.

"Ah! is it *news*?—a fact?—a realism?—or only a suggestion—like an elusive perfume on the evening breeze?"

"The latter would be the more poetic," Long replied, laughing, "but in either case, you would have to explain."

"Ah!" Frankie dropped his voice to mysterious secrecy. "I opine, Mr. Long, that something will shortly be doing."

"Something's doing all the time, Mr. Lewis. To what in particular do you refer?"

"Hush! A movement!—a decided movement in the marts of trade."

"Quite so, but what?"

"Mr. Long, *real estate* stirs!"

"Damn it! I'm afraid so." Long shook his head sorrowfully.

The expression on Frankie's face changed to one of intense pain and feigned surprise. "'Damn it! you're afraid so', and you speak these words to Gopherburg's Auctioneer, Real Estate and Insurance Agent, gentlemen?" He raised his hands to his throat as if to tear away the garroter's cord stifling the breath of life.

"Yes, I say *that*; and moreover, I mean it."

"Mr. Long, my dear friend, I am—you do not mind my referring to you thus familiarly?"

"Not in the least—pray continue."

"Thank you, Mr. Long, then I may add that I am pained, grieved and disappointed."

In this statement of facts, Frankie was speaking the truth literally. The object of his call had been to discover the attitude of the bank manager upon the subject of real estate. Would he, in short, fan the harvest breeze (for Mr. Lewis) or, on the contrary, prove a blighting cloud? And since Long had "tumbled" to this from the moment Frankie had spoken the words "real estate", it is abundantly clear that the policy he intended to adopt (and to be breezed forth to the populace in the person of Frankie Lewis) was that of "a blighting cloud".

It was Long who resumed the discourse. "And what makes you believe that a boom is—impending,

Mr. Lewis? I think you used the word odor—or was it perfume?"

"Tut, tut, Mr. Long, that was my little joke. I am given to little jokes, and metaphor."

"Yet," Long replied, thoughtfully, "I believe the nose *is* sensitive to real estate booms."

"Ah! you flatter my perspicuity."

"Yes, Mr. Lewis, I've smelt 'em before." The utterance and face were enigmatic and hooded the irony.

Frankie looked up quickly, realized that, if the words had a point he had missed it, and returned to the symptoms. "You asked me why I think it is coming? And I answer, Mr. Long, from signs of public interest; an inquiry here, a nibble there, and, for the rest—intuition. That branch of my business is like playing a hand at bridge: you have to know, and, if you don't know, it's no use thinking."

Long laughed. "And nothing now remains but to hope for the worst, eh?"

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! There you go again."

"Yes, and with good reason. For the legitimate side of the real estate business, Mr. Lewis, I have no quarrel. The purchase of a house to live in, of a farm to farm, or lots upon which to build a home or a business block—"

"For this relief, much thanks!" quoted Frankie, raising his eyes to heaven.

"But for unjustifiable gambling in unimproved land, dubbed a 'boom', with its consequent disappointments and financial embarrassments, I have nothing but dread and disgust."

"You speak vehemently, as one enangered." Frankie was coining words in his misery.

"It's already cost me my junior clerk."

Frankie whistled. " 'Tootles'?"

"Yes. The young idiot is going in with a friend in Saskatoon—the first casualty!"

"There's as good fish in the sea—"

"But Gopherburg is not on the sea, so the fishing is limited. Besides, Thomas has been my stenographer as well as junior."

"Hence this bitterness?"

"In part, perhaps."

Frankie quoted the common slogan: "It pays to advertise!"

"That's a suggestion, anyway."

"And your views upon the subject are irrevocable?"

"Absolutely. Indeed, I go further. If anyone came to me with the alternatives that he should either gamble in real estate, or, say—get drunk and beat up his wife."

"You surely would not *advise* drunkenness and wife-beating?"

"No," Long admitted. "I should tell him *to leave the real estate alone!*"

A very crest-fallen human robin rose to his feet. "Then, I say it, conscious of my inner self, you have broken my heart." He raised his right hand and placed it slightly to the left of the third vest button. "Yes, Mr. Long, you have *wrecked* that noble organ for Gopherburg's Auctioneer, Real Estate and Insurance Agent, gentlemen." He bowed and ambled from the room, as if in dread lest the wreckage might strew the floor.

Long thought for a few minutes. He reasoned that with a boom pending, the bank's supervisor's

department would be faced with the problem of an exodus of clerks of the "quitting" type; and that to apply for assistance in that quarter would be futile. It might, on the other hand, and as Frankie had suggested, pay to advertise, so he drafted an advertisement for a junior clerk for *The News*, due to appear the following day, Wednesday. In this he stressed a preference for one with stenographic experience.

On Saturday morning, a raw-boned youth of nineteen years presented himself as an applicant, but, at first, Long was impressed so unfavorably that he did not entertain a glimmer of hope. Ernest Rolston, for as such he gave his name, was wearing a suit of the "hand-me-downs" variety, much worn, baggy at the knees and short at the ankles; further, a haircut was long over-due. The term "rough-neck", in fact, suited him admirably. Questioned as to his qualifications, Rolston claimed not only a knowledge of bookkeeping, but also shorthand and typewriting. Long quickly put him to the test concerning these latter accomplishments, and Rolston made good. Next came the question of references and three were produced of the "To whom it may concern" type. They were on the letter paper of different lumber companies, and served to show that Ernest Rolston had, in the respective terms of employment, performed the duties of bookkeeper, timekeeper and stenographer in a conscientious and satisfactory manner. Long asked the applicant to come back in an hour.

Judgment of men is one of the essential qualifications of a bank manager, and, in Frankie Lewis' words, "if he doesn't know—it's no use thinking". As a matter of fact, Long *did* know. His first "hunch"

was the correct one—Rolston was a rough-neck and an undesirable. But his need was great and the applicant's ability as a stenographer undeniable, so he took an hour to think it over, to persuade himself that it was not fair to judge the youth by appearances; that he would smarten up in town; and that the references were good enough.

The outcome was what might have been expected. Long gave his recommendation and Rolston was duly appointed. But for some days afterwards—until other matters drove the incident out of his head—certain mocking advice recurred to Long again and again as twinges to his conscience. And, since that time, whenever he feels that his judgment is slipping—that he is on the point of giving the other fellow and not the bank the benefit of the doubt, he repeats the words to himself: "Teach thy necessity to reason thus".

CHAPTER XVI.

A CONFIRMATION

TO THE Reverend Philimore Dobson, life was one continuous joyous occasion, for the doctrine of cheerfulness was not with him a pose, a beautiful thought and only a thought, to be propounded from the pulpit, but an actuality; something to be lived the whole day long.

A book agent, or a peddler of household remedies, could not have covered Gopherburg and district more thoroughly or with greater speed. He was as busy as a beaver. In an incredibly short space of time, he was known far and wide and, since effervescing merriment and goodfellowship are contagious, others caught the thing and lined up beneath his banner.

But, behind it all—this human cheerfulness—was a great Christianity; the power and determination to do good in the name of Him he served. The sick, the troubled, the needy, knew this other side of his character and loved him with good cause; whilst the well and wealthy, at his bidding, contributed the material wherewithal.

To this man who had *served* in the wilds of Africa and the slums of London, the duty of a minister of God came—without thought of creed, nationality or colour—under two heads: to carry the word, and to do good. And here, in western Canada, he recog-

nised a no more defined field for his labours. He was broad-minded to the point where many a zealous layman would have raised his hands in horror. The subtle distinctions of man-made creeds simply did not exist. God was God, and Christ was the divine inspiration of Christianity. The minor details (as dear old Teshoo Lama would have said) were illusion. Is it to be wondered at, then, that on Sundays the pews of the little church were filled, and that chairs on each side of the aisle took the overflow. People came once to see if they liked it, and came again because they did.

Of course, the interior had been brightened up to harmonise with the choral singing, and Mrs. Bridget's artistry on the organ. Dowdiness was no virtue in the eyes of the exponent of cheerfulness.

It was Long who, at a timely hint, had given a new lectern; and "Cap" Marsden—such is the force of example—had promptly placed an order for a pulpit with Will Croft, carpenter, wood-carver, and sometime maker of coffins. And a mighty good job he made of it. As for the flowers, they were the work of the altar guild, organized with infinite tact and carefully hand-picked. Sybil Thurston was permitted to contribute her mite here, and it made an excellent showing.

So, in due course, the day arrived when the Bishop would confirm those a Rector of beaver-like industry had gathered within the fold and prepared for the ceremony.

The worthy prelate had arrived in Gopherburg the evening before, and had spent the night at the rectory. What is more, he had retired early.

Does it not then appear unmerited—a veritable slap at the “early to bed makes you healthy” theory—that he had awakened next morning with a cracking headache? It was one of those appalling, agonizing headaches that will not behave themselves even when the head itself is resting quietly on a pillow; a vicious, aggressive headache that would not stay put for a moment. And it was in this sad state that Mr. Dobson found his guest when he tapped cheerily on his door.

What was to be done?

Holding his forehead to restrain interior throbbing, the Bishop named the remedies: “phenacetine” and “strong tea”.

So Mr. Dobson went downstairs to interview Mrs. Slaney who, in the ordinary course of her professional duties as a wash-and-char-lady, looked after the rectory and, on special occasions, got his meals. Always excepting a mother and her children, and husband and wife, where the vows to love, honour and succour remain sacred, nobody really gives a hoot for other people’s ailments. If Mrs. Giles has a painful itching bunion on her left foot, Mrs. Tomkins, her boon companion, will say: “Oh! my dear, I am *so* sorry!” But it’s purely conventional. Deep down in her heart she does not care if it is stinging like the very devil. She, too, has one or two ailments of her own, did she care to mention them. With men—being less sympathetic and conventional—the pretense is even more hollow and the really wise sufferer with an ingrowing toe-nail either lets it grow or goes to a doctor and has it cut out. Now, Mr. Dobson, as has already been stated, was a man of great sympathies and human love, but even he was

incapable of feeling towards the Bishop's ailment the solicitude and respect such a headache deserved. How should he—enjoying rugged health and entire freedom from headaches—appreciate the fact that a man like the Bishop, six feet one in his socks, could be suffering such extremis; in fact, that the bigger the man, the bigger the headache.

Said Mr. Dobson, having located the char-lady in the kitchen: "Mrs. Slaney, can you make strong tea?"

"Why, yes, o' course I can. Oo for?—'im?" Mrs. Slaney threw up her chin, indicating the occupant upstairs.

"Precisely, Mrs. Slaney, the Bishop. He has a bad headache."

"O lor'!"

"Yes, indeed, Mrs. Slaney, and would Slim be around?"

"'E was a-playin' at the fence w'en I come in."

"Then do you think he would be good enough to run down to the drug-store and get some phenacetine tablets?"

"'E'll go quick w'en I tell 'im."

"Perhaps, Mrs. Slaney, you would be so kind as to do so?"

A few minutes later the violent ringing of his "night" bell awakened Mr. Sidney Jackson from the luxury of his Sunday morning sleep and, pulling on trousers and coat, the druggist descended to interview the customer.

"Please, Mr. Jackson," announced Slim, thoroughly enjoying his momentary importance, "please, I want some vaseline tablets for Mr. Dobson."

"Vaseline tablets? Never heard of them."

"Not vaseline—faseline."

"What are they for?"

"'Eadache."

"For Mr. Dobson? Rubbish! Someone's been pulling your leg, Slim."

"They ain't for 'im. It's for the 'Bish'—'e's got a corker."

And what Mrs. Slaney and Slim knew at 8.30, all Gopherburg knew at 11 o'clock.

* * * * *

Ding! Ding! Ding! From every direction family clusters were scurrying churchward in their Sunday clothes.

In the vacant lots behind the building, where posts and rails for tying horses were provided, single rigs and double-seated top buggies were unloading their rural church-goers.

Ding! Ding! Ding! Hurry up, good people, for the pews are filling fast, and it will be a case of families sitting "indian file" down the aisle, and not "all in a row" if you don't put a little "pep" into it.

The wardens, Mr. Passman and Mr. Mallory, had *never* had their hands so full, or seen the church so packed; and if the little Mallorys had not been instructed to "spread out a bit", it is a question whether some pushing individual might not have pushed himself into the Mallory pew and annexed the warden's space.

Ding! Ding! Ding! for the last time! Everyone settled and comfortable and nothing left to do but eject the Benson terrier and "Cap" Marsden's airedale—and commence the service.

To attempt to enumerate those present were absurd, for the simple reason that everyone seemed to be there. If it were permissible to look at pretty girls in church—where eyes are supposed to either look ahead or be cast devoutly down—then Peggy Bolton and Sybil Thurston would deserve special mention; and Samuel Thurston, whose contribution to church funds of \$100 per annum was only equalled by Mallory's, might well be proud of a daughter who could hold her own, in outward appearance at any rate, beside so charming a girl as Peggy. A blond and a brunette, and both adorable!

Yet Jimmy Long, who had selected a seat one pew behind them on the other side of the aisle, and who looked in their direction whenever he dared, in spite of all the rules of what one should do in church, would not have crossed the road—except in common courtesy—to meet the one, and would have pawned his immortal soul to take the other in his arms and kiss the dear red lips. For *that* is love.

All this time, Mrs. Bridget, at the organ, was playing as voluntaries, Mendelssohn's exquisite melodies; moreover, playing them so beautifully that the uninformed really believed the blue and gold pipes were contributing to the effect, whereas, of course, the instrument was in truth only a glorified harmonium, and the blue and gold pipes in front just "dummies" and unresponsive to the key-board. Mrs. Bridget had a little mirror attached to the organ in which she glanced occasionally, not to see if her hat was straight or to admire herself, but to see what was going on behind her. The little mirror served as eyes in the back of her head, which is helpful to an organist in timing—in concluding the voluntary

and commencing the processional hymn, or vice versa. But Mrs. Bridget was skilled, and did not need to keep her eyes glued to her music, and, being a woman, and very human, she missed nothing going on behind her in the way of human interest. The casual selection of a seat for himself by Jimmy Long, for instance, had amused her not a little.

The service commenced with the processional hymn, "Onward Christian Soldiers", the Bishop bringing up the rear; and not one pair of eyes missed the gaunt figure in the baggy sleeved surplice and black wrist bands. They would have looked, anyway, on this or any other Sunday, because bishops and others high in their callings must expect to be looked at. But to-day the curiosity was acute. "How was the headache—gone, or still with him?" And Squirrel Munroe expressed the general verdict in a guarded undertone to his wife: "He's still a bit white about the gills!"

The duties of a frontier bishop are many and his responsibilities very great. The organizing of a huge diocese, and the financing of its scattered ministries alone being enough to tax the ingenuity of the ablest man. But these are the material or mechanical side of the work. The spiritual side, to attain the highest ideals, must be the result of personal effort in the field, in example, personal magnetism and sacrifice.

The gaunt man, then the centre of all eyes, was known, loved and respected over a far-reaching territory. "The Bish", as he was commonly and affectionately called in rough lumber camps miles from civilization proper, covered as much ground in his year's work as many a commercial traveller; and, unlike the "gentlemen of the road", did so patiently,

with no thought of personal comfort, and without grumbling. A foul-smelling railway carriage, a democrat over rough trails or a dog-team through the winter woods, were all alike to him; and to sleep in blankets on the ground in damp forests in summer, or to brave the horrors of the road-house bunk in winter, were merely incidents of his work.

Such men truly "serve", and a kindly nature should privilege them above their fellows. To be spared the petty personal ailments would appear only reasonable. And, to-day, when he had sacred duties to perform and wished to be at his best, his weary body had thrown him down—he had a cracking headache.

The reader has watched the Rev. Philimore Dobson fishing quiescently with line and sinker, and cannot but have formed the opinion that he was a very indifferent fisherman, which, so far as the finny tribe is concerned, was true enough. As a fisher of souls, however, the case was entirely different. "Beaver-like", the reader will recollect, was the metaphor used to describe his activity, and in the place of line and sinker he used a small mesh sweep net, that none suitable to be called might escape.

He was pleased with his "bag"—his candidates for confirmation—now occupying the first two pews on either side of the aisle. For the time at his disposal, he felt, and not without justification, that he had done well. Of course, the majority were Gopherburg youths and maidens and sons and daughters of farmers in the vicinity in goodly assortment, but there were adults also, including a Finlander woman of Greek Church persuasion, two of another faith, a coal-black Negro, and Ah Wing, the Chinese

laundryman. And it was these, these more "difficult" fish, that little Dobson regarded as the cream of the bag, and which delighted his spiritual being.

The good Bishop had got through his work bravely so far, for the Rector had spared him as much as possible by conducting all of the usual portions of the service, including the reading of the lessons, himself. He *must*, however, in spite of his headache, give his address from the pulpit.

He subsequently told Dobson that he did not know just how he got up the steps, but, once there, he steadied himself with his hands, enduring the throb, throb, throb as best he might.

Silence. The congregation was waiting for him to begin. He raised his hand and pressed the palm to his forehead to still the agonizing throbs—permitting his eyes to take in the occupants of the first two pews, face by face. Then he announced his text:

"*Nothing but leaves,*" he said, "*nothing but leaves.*"

* * * * *

Outside, Long found "Cap" Marsden waiting for him. The blonde giant was idly leaning against the fence smiling to himself; and, as Long came up, he raised his right hand and, with extended palm, did an excellent imitation of a fish swimming along the top of the palings.

He then put a question asked many times that day, and still remembered in Gopherburg. "Tell me, Long, just which was 'the Bish' referring to, Dobson's mixed bag of candidates, or the breakfast tea that didn't cure his headache?"

But it is still unanswered!

Then the Thurstons and Peggy passed.

"Say! Long, who's *that?*"

"With the Thurstons?"

"Of course," "Cap" Marsden **was** following her with his eyes.

"It's Miss Bolton—a guest."

"Pretty girl. A *peach*. What?"

CHAPTER XVII.

AN UNPLEASANT DUTY

STAFF-SERGEANT Cawley-Brown, whose flat silver had been in the family since the reign of Charles III on the positive assertion of his wife, listened to the man's tale with haughty incredulity. "And you think," he asked, turning severe brows upon Jake Skelton, "just because you've lost a yearling, and found some new-turned earth, that the two go together?"

"I thought maybe they might."

"When did you see the yearling last?"

"'Bout a week ago. It was with the bunch feeding round an old straw pile."

"What are the markings?"

"It's a Shorthorn with a white face—sired by Jones' 'scrub' bull. Drat him!"

Skelton was referring to one of those unsolicited acts of parentage by a "scrub" all too common in a country where the cattle feed on the range. This is a matter of constant irritation to any farmer who is trying to improve the blood in his herd. Cawley-Brown could picture the misbegotten calf, and smiled. "You could swear to your Shorthorn-Hereford, eh?"

"Anywhere."

"And when did you find the—the burial place?"

"This morning. I had dinner and came right in to town."

"Tell anyone?"

"No."

"Quite right. But I don't think there's anything to it."

"Then let it go, Sergeant. But it ain't the first critter that's been lost around here this past year or two and never heard of again. And I thought *perhaps* the police would like to look into it." Skelton had him where the hair was short.

"Oh! it will 'ave to be investigated, of course!"

"I'll leave it to you then." The farmer rose to go.

"Wait a minute. It's too late to do anything this evening. Can you stay in town over night?"

"I guess so."

"Then I'll send Corporal Smith out with you in the morning; and say nothing to anyone."

And Jake Skelton departed.

* * * * *

It was a very miserable Tommy Smith who, riding his Nellie mare, accompanied Skelton north next morning. His instructions were definite. A spade was to be procured at the informant's farm and the spot under suspicion was to be dug up. If the remains of the yearling, as described, were unearthed, he was to arrest William Bradley and bring him back to town, for which action he was provided with the necessary warrant.

In Tommy Smith's heart there was not an atom of doubt as to Bradley; nor, in truth, did he expect to find anything. But that it should fall to his lot to poke around *there* was hell, particular hell! And

if it came to Lucy's ears—well, he didn't just know what she would think of it. Then, again, supposing there was something buried!—it didn't make any difference whether he knew Bradley to be guiltless or not—his orders were to arrest him, to arrest Bill, his fiancee's brother. Damn the force. Damn Skelton. Damn everything.

It is unnecessary to disinter spadeful by spadeful the gruesome remains of Jake Skelton's cross-bred yearling—the Shorthorn with the Hereford's face. It is sufficient to state that Corporal Smith found that which Staff-Sergeant Cawley-Brown had instructed him to look for, viz: "the 'ide, the 'ead and the 'ooves".

In only one thing had Samuel Thurston misled his tool, Jake Skelton. It was not "the police" who did the digging. Arriving at the accursed spot, Corporal Smith had turned upon the bearer of the spade and, pointing to the ground, had said: "You say the remains of your yearling are there, Skelton. Then dig—and get a hustle on." And, sweating, the wretched Skelton had digged where but a few days before he had buried.

But Corporal Smith, watching the proceedings, was by far the more to be pitied; and when the evidence of guilt, somebody's guilt, came to light, his face paled with the forebodings of evil hammering at his heart. He sought and found the cause of death—a rifle bullet. "Take that mess home with you, Skelton. I'll leave it in your charge." And he walked back to the fence, where he had left his mare.

Oh, misery! He must now face the Bradleys and must take from two defenceless women their bread-

winner and protector. If he had foreseen the possibility of such a situation as this, he would have got out of the force in good time—bought himself out, if necessary, but it was too late now!

The gate into the homestead enclosure was open and he rode right up to the door of the shack. It was Mrs. Bradley, the baby in her arms, who responded to his knock. "Why, Mr. Smith," she said, "you're around early this morning."

"Yes, Mrs. Bradley, I have business with your husband. Is he here?"

Lucy appeared in the doorway and, taking her sister-in-law by the arm, drew her into the room. Then she returned. "What is it, Tommy?"

"It's only fair to warn you, Lucy. I am on police duty. I want your brother."

"What for?"

"He is charged with an offence. I have a warrant for his arrest. Is he inside?"

"No, Corporal Smith."

"Your word is enough. Did he sleep here last night?"

"Yes."

"Do you know where he is?"

"No! And if I did, I would not tell you."

"I'm sorry, Lucy. You ought to know how sorry! But the crime's a serious one."

"What crime?"

"Cattle rustling."

Lucy's face showed her surprise, and her cheeks, pale till now, flushed with indignation. "It's a lie, and you know it. Oh! how dare you come here with your lies—you coward!"

"I'm a policeman on duty," he replied simply.

"Then go, policeman! and never speak to me again."

"Oh, Lucy, girl, be reasonable. Can't you understand that I must do as ordered?"

"I tell you, Corporal Smith, to go about your business!" She turned her back and, stepping inside the shack, shut the door.

Tommy Smith turned his Nellie mare and permitted her to walk back to the trail. He must pull his miserable senses together. As far as Lucy and himself were concerned? No, he must not think about that at all, unless he wanted to disgrace his uniform. But Bradley? He had expected to find him there, working around as usual, innocent and ignorant of the crime. Whereas the man had fled! There had been a leakage somewhere—an eavesdropper around the police shack likely—and a message of warning had been sent north to Bill. There wasn't a doubt about that, and the wife and sister knew of it, too. Could Bill have killed the yearling? No, no, no. That was impossible and unthinkable. Then there must be some other complication of which he hadn't a clew. Well! that must wait. The first thing was to find Bradley.

He had swung north at the gate, instinctively. A fugitive from justice would be sure to head away from civilization and not into it. Yes, Bradley would cross the Saskatchewan River at the ford and go to cover in the heavy timber. He confirmed his deductions a few moments later, for, on the woods trail, across the north-east corner of Bradley's homestead to the ford, he met a buckskin-coated shanty-man.

"Seen anything of Bill Bradley?" Smith had inquired.

"Yes," the man had replied, "two hours ago across the river. He had his rifle. Guess he's after—" He put his hand over his mouth, pretending to stop the words, and laughed.

"Oh, that's all right," Smith had retorted. "What the police don't know won't hurt anyone. Thanks."

At the ford there was a precarious flat-bottomed boat and cable to serve as a ferry and which did well enough for a foot passenger ready to take his life in his hands, but horses must take the water. Nellie stepped in daintily enough and progressed until the cold stream touched her belly; then she reared and plunged in protest. Another time, Tommy Smith would have spoken very severely, but to-day what he said was: "All right, Nellie, there's your head. Now drown us both if you have a mind to." And, for the second time that day, her sex "threw him down". She took him safely across.

Smith knew of an old log shanty four or five miles north in the timber, where a settler had tried to hew out a home for himself some years previously. He had been half crazed when he went there and had stayed until loneliness and privation had completed the job. It was for this wretched place he now headed.

"Stop!" The command was shouted across the small clearing.

Corporal Smith halted his mare. Yes! there was Bradley leaning against the doorless portal, rifle to shoulder. The Mountie smiled and slipping to the ground, threw the rein over Nellie's head. Then with either hand he pulled the scarlet tunic even at the lower edge and, that settled to his satisfaction,

walked with arms swinging at his sides right into the pointed rifle.

O! gallant Force! Not once, but hundreds of times did thy members do this thing in the days that are no more. They armed thee with rifles and revolvers, but thou scorned to use them, and faced death fearlessly with empty hands. A great tradition of brave men. May it never be forgot.

"William Bradley, I have a warrant for your arrest. You are my prisoner." Corporal Smith was at his side.

"Seems to me they're making a fuss about a very little." Bradley was hanging his head shamefacedly. "But I'll come."

"Very little? You're accused of cattle rustling. But I warn you, anything you say may be used in evidence against you."

Bradley's mouth opened in bewilderment. "Cattle rustling! Nonsense, man, you know I wouldn't do that!"

"Bill, I *do* know it—but that's what you're charged with." Then Tommy Smith remembered his perplexity of the morning. "But why, in heaven's name—when somebody tipped you off—*did* you run away?"

His prisoner grinned sheepishly. "I shot a cow moose for meat two or three weeks ago."

"Oh! Bill, I'm afraid you've made a bad case against yourself. But it's too late now. Thank goodness you did not make it worse by *resisting arrest*."

Bradley smiled grimly, then looked at the policeman's face to read the meaning in the words.

"Come!" said Corporal Smith.

They travelled in silence back to the ford. At this point, instead of retracing his steps to the north and south trail, Smith turned to the right until they struck the private path to the creek mouth and thence back to the shack. "I'll wait at the gate," he told his prisoner. "Take your rifle, Bill, and let Lucy see you put it back in its place. Fifteen minutes!" Corporal Smith looked at his watch.

They started off again down the south trail Smith walking and leading his Nellie mare, and so for the first mile. Then Tommy Smith spoke. "Bill, you know your sister and I were engaged."

"Were, Smith?" Bradley turned to catch the words in reply without misunderstanding.

"She told me this morning to go about my business and never speak to her again."

"She's a woman! and I'm mindful that she loves you."

Within sight of the farmhouse where Smith intended to requisition a horse and buggy to take Bradley to town, he spoke once more. "Bill, dear friend, may I ask a personal question?"

"Yes—Tommy."

"How much money have they?" Tommy Smith jerked his head back—he could not trust himself to speak their names.

The homesteader hesitated a moment. He was a man and he must not betray his soul. "Two dollars and forty-five cents," he said.

"I'll try and look after them, Bill." Tommy Smith's right hand went out sideways into Bill Bradley's grasp. More they dare not do—these two brave men.

* * * * *

Next morning, at 10.45 to be exact, Tommy Smith walked into Long's office at the bank and closed the door. Next, he skimmed his flat brimmed Stetson police hat into a chair remote from the desk and threw himself into the one adjacent. His legs were stuck out stiffly in the sitting attitude of one habitually clothed in riding breeches tight at the knees. And his general pose was that of utter and hopeless dejection.

Said Long, looking up smiling and putting down his pen. "By all means, Tommy, tell the best news first."

"There ain't no such thing, Jimmy. It's hell, simply hell!"

"The motion is seconded and carried without division," Long agreed. "But, lord love a duck! What is it?"

So Tommy told his friend all that had happened: the finding of the damning remains on Bradley's homestead, Lucy's dismissal of him and the arrest of Bradley. "And," he concluded, "there's the cruelty of the beastly law. Even if Bill were guilty—which I am sure he is not—what justice is there in locking him up to await trial and leave women defenceless and penniless?"

Long frowned. "The law's hard, at times," he admitted. "But is it really as bad as that? The money part, I mean."

"Two dollars and forty-five cents."

"Humph! How about bail?"

"Not on that charge—at least, not for anything we could handle."

"Then you were right!" Long agreed.

"In what?"

"Why, it *is* hell."

"Oh, Jimmy! can't you think? We've got to do something."

"We're going to—don't worry."

"What, man—what? I'm past thinking."

Long took a sheet of paper and ruled two columns. Then he reached for his hat. "We're going to beg" he said.

They went down one side of the two streets making up the business section and back the other. And the storekeepers—always the first to put their hands in their pockets for a good cause—responded to a man. Of course, Long made his little spiel: "They've got poor Bill Bradley locked up on a charge of killing one of Skelton's yearlings, and the family's broke—wife had a baby recently, you know. Will you chip in?" So they chipped in, these kindly prairie people, according to their means.

They met "Cap" Marsden and him Long touched for ten dollars in the name of charity first and gave the details to him afterwards.

"Cattle rustling?" Marsden laughed. "Nice jack-pot that, for me to ante into! I'll buy the drinks for that," he invited.

"Thanks," Long replied, "but it's our busy day."

They counted up the spoils in the bank and balanced them against the list. It was ample for present needs: ninety-two dollars.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN OYSTER-STEW SOCIAL

THE Methodists make the best beet salad. There is not a doubt about this, and the honour must be conceded. But with regard to cooking generally, including cakes, candies, pies, jellied meats and bread stuffs, whether to be taken away or consumed on the premises, there is not much between the creeds. The Presbyterians might have a slight edge in oat meal cookies, due to the preponderance of Scotch blood in their forces; and the Anglicans a shade in fruit cakes, pork pies and sausage rolls, but the degree of gastronomic excellence is subtle and, after all, largely a matter of taste.

Deep chicken pies "for sale" are hazardous as individual purchases and should be barred. For, if by ill-luck your selection happens to have been made and donated by an economist who fed the chickens to the family and put the giblets only into her pies, you are *good* and properly stung, and that, as the lawyers say, "without recourse". You cannot possibly see what lies beneath that tempting-looking crust, all shining brown with white of egg; and to carry home your prize only to find, at supper time, in lieu of chicken, the 'ead, the 'ide and the 'ooves, is too disappointing for words. So bar them altogether, these chicken (?) pies, or *caveat emptor*.

The reader may be wondering where a discussion upon human foods can have any place in the telling of this story. But food is a basic impulse. Napoleon, in his day, went so far as to say that "the belly rules the world"; and, to this day in western Canada, it finances churches, hospitals and other good works. It is the women of western Canada, of course, who are behind this movement upon the general principle of "feed the brutes"; and they have endowed it, as might be expected, with infinite variety—teas, suppers, garden socials and sales of cooking being some of the visible forms; and it is a good even-money bet that not one week will pass in any given prairie town without a tea, supper or sale of food for one or other of the churches. In the open seasons of spring and fall, there will be probably three or four such functions each week and, not infrequently, two or three on a single day. How do they do it? the reader may well ask, in open-mouthed astonishment. And *that*, correctly speaking, is the answer—open mouthed! It is the belly that does it, and its infinite capacity. We only wish that we might do full justice to the subject.

The underlying principle to success in church financing via the food route is enough mouths, which means that whether the function be Presbyterian, Catholic, Methodist, Anglican, Baptist, Seventh Day Adventist or Hornerite, outsiders to the fold must contribute their quota. "All help one another," is the motto that makes to success and, in all justice, they play the game. On busy days (above alluded to), good church workers must flit from tea to tea upon the argument, "if we don't go to theirs, they won't come to ours": and they do it, getting their

money's worth at each, without removing a hat-pin. Occasionally an objector may be found, like the witty Catholic lady who declined a box of pull-taffy with the remark that: "she had broken every tooth in her head chewing that damn stuff to pay off the Anglican mortgage and would have no more of it!" But, usually, they chew as a matter of sound business and without complaint.

To the male mind, true, all the labour, diplomacy and heart burns, incidental to such methods of raising money, appear round-about, and, brutally expressed, not worth the candle. The argument is that the provisions must be made and the material paid for by someone; and that the outside money received from those of other denominations must be repaid upon reciprocal lines. Then why not cut it all out and let the men—who pay, in the long run, anyway—pony up the amount required and be done with it, instead of imitating the inhabitants of the legendary village who earned their livings doing one another's washing? But the ladies smile superiorly, and brush such male logic aside. "No!" they say, "it can't be done that way—" And who knows? Maybe they are right!

Which brings us to the beautiful June day in Gopherburg selected by the Women's Auxiliary of the Anglican Church for their Oyster-stew Social: 5 to 7 o'clock, admission 35 cents.

Mrs. Passman and Mrs. Mallory, wives of the wardens, and themselves active church workers, had approached Long two weeks before for permission to use his lawn for the event, and this, of course, he had given. "Help yourselves, ladies," he had said, "and the kitchen will be at your disposal."

Bright and early at 5 o'clock, the crowd commenced to arrive, for the inevitable ice-cream was to be served at a special stall with a musical programme as a preliminary to the sit down oyster-stew supper; and, of course, the ladies must take it all in. With the matrons, or in small parties, came the maidens of Gopherburg in their white party frocks, and giggling after their kind. The girls' beaux (for, be sure, they were not far behind) next put in an appearance and, since it was their duty and privilege to do the treating, the ice-cream stall was soon the centre of a merry mob, and the social was off to a good start.

To Mrs. Passman, convenor of the Women's Auxiliary, and her fellow workers in the kitchen tying up coffee in little muslin sacks ready for the boiling, and ladling out milk and oysters preparatory to the stewing, a terrible thought suddenly occurred: Where was the musical programme? For there had not been a sound! So poor Mrs. Passman, all fussed up with ladling slimy bulk oysters, wiped her hands on a dish cloth and rushed out to face the worst. Yes, there was the rented piano sitting on the lawn, patiently waiting to be played on, so it wasn't its fault. But of the Sawyers, the talented family who had promised to come in to town with their voices and violins, not a sign! What is more, they never did show up all evening and, as you cannot have music without musicians, and it was too late to get anyone else, *that* was off. And Mrs. Passman returned to the kitchen all het up with vexation.

Whether that had anything to do with what followed, it is difficult to say, but no sooner were the milk saucepans set upon the range than the pesky thing commenced to act up. Now that second-

hand range had cost Long twenty-five dollars in cold cash and he had set the fire and lighted it himself, so there was no excuse for it to misbehave itself. Then why must the smoke ooze out of all the crevices of the four-hole top in preference to going up the chimney? And why? Oh why? wouldn't it get hot?

In their hour of need, thoughts of Mrs. Slaney, char-and-wash-lady, and ex-officio operator of strange ranges, occurred to the troubled catering committee of the Women's Auxiliary then present in the kitchen; and her name was mentioned timidly. Mrs. Slaney was herself a member of the Auxiliary and was, as a matter of fact, within stone's throw on the lawn. Then why this hesitation to call upon her expert services? Ah, why?

It is necessary to go back to the monthly meeting of the Women's Auxiliary, held some three weeks previously, to appreciate the delicacy of the situation. On this occasion, the question of putting on an oyster supper had then been broached and discussed, and, with one exception, the members had been for it enthusiastically. The exception had been Mrs. Slaney and her consent had been strictly qualified.

"H'oyster supper, is it, ladies?" Mrs. Slaney had addressed the gathering, "then 'ave it y'own way. But min' me, hif I know anythin' of it, h'oyster stew means a-cookin' an' a-washin' up. 'Oo's a-going to do it? Not *me*. I tell you that right now."

Mrs. Passman, in the chair, had smiled and nodded as much as to say that Mrs. Slaney had the floor and was entitled to state her mind. And Mrs. Slaney continued:

"Back 'ome in Brumagem, we 'ad our charity bazaars an' our sales o' work; an' h'everythin' went h'off smooth an' lovely. But h'oyster stews!" Mrs. Slaney drew herself up expressively. "H'it don't look good to me—might as well be fish an' chips!"

"As I understand you, Mrs. Slaney," the Chair had questioned, "your chief objection is to assisting in the cooking and the washing up?"

"An' you've 'it the nail on the 'ead!"

"Possibly you would assist in some other way?"
Mrs. Passman had suggested mildly.

"H'i don't mind a-pourin' tea," Mrs. Slaney had assented. And so it had been arranged.

Mrs. Slaney (in case the reader has never met her) was the slum bred and raised low type of bedraggled skirted English woman who comes to Canada to escape the beastliness of her former existence but who, within a year, compares everything Canadian—unfavourably, of course—with "'ow they did it at 'ome". This particular Mrs. Slaney had thrived since char-and-wash-ladies are scarce and remuneration for such services runs high. An immediate improvement in appearance had been achieved by diligent study of "mail-order" catalogues; for a Canadian-made skirt, even "our special at \$2.98" does not hang three inches lower behind than in front as does its English prototype, than which nothing is more appalling. Further, in kindly western Canada, the Church is the back door to social life and, while membership to a Women's Auxiliary might not entitle a char-and-wash-lady to the privilege of dining at the houses of her fellow members, it would certainly necessitate her taking tea in their parlours.

The Gopherburg Mrs. Slaney had done all this and more. From being a down-trodden worm in "dear old Brumagem", saying "Yes, mum—thank you, mum" for her char-woman's dole, she now did "'alf a day's work as a favour", and, moreover, valued her favours high. Her views of equality engendered sauciness. And her money in the bank gave her a feeling of independence. Mrs. Slaney, in short, was feeling her oats.

All this time the range continued to ooze smoke and to keep cool, whilst the poor ladies, opening this draft and shutting that damper, waxed hotter and hotter. "Oh! fetch Mrs. Slaney, someone, for goodness' sake," said the convenor finally, in desperation. And the char-and-wash-lady was fetched.

So Mrs. Slaney came, saw, and, with ugly lower lip protruding, contributed as follows: "Well! ladies, I tol' you 'ow it would be, an' a pretty mess you've made h'of it. Will I 'elp? I will not! An', if you don't like hit, h'll go 'ome." With which ultimatum she returned to her social duties.

In this desperate strait, little Mrs. Evans found and pushed with her dimpled hand a lever to the right of the oven not so far experimented with. The effect was instantaneous! The four-hole top ceased its emission of smoke and a roar through the fire-box announced that the fire was drawing at last! They crowded round little Mrs. Evans and patted her; and she was filled with joyful pride.

On the frontiers of civilization in a cold country, no heat is wasted; and even the smoke-pipe from the kitchen range is carried through the ceiling, and thence through the room above to a brick chimney on a bracket—say twenty feet of pipe (suitable for

warming purposes) in all. If you open the *main draft*, however, of the said kitchen range with the fire-box filled with wood, it takes exactly one minute and a half for the chimney, including the twenty feet of tin piping, to be on fire. And that is what little Mrs. Evans had done.

Outside, on the lawn, falling soots on the beautiful clean tablecloths tolled the warning bell, but, while "thick and fast they came at last, and more, and more, and more!" Long did not wait to see them. With a bound he was in his kitchen, shut the main draft, threw a cup full of salt on the fire and spoke words of comfort to the horrified ladies. Oh! how it roared! Then up-stairs he sprang to the room above where the white-hot horizontal pipe sparked and crackled. If only the wires staying it to the ceiling held! Yes! it was dying down—the white heat dulling to red.

On Long's return to the kitchen, things were somewhat hectic, for the coffee and tea water were boiling and the milk for the oysters ready for their submersion. What, with the fire and excitement, and boiling pots and everybody trying to do everything at the same time it was no place for a man, so Long adjusted the range drafts to where they should be and beat it outside again.

Here also work had to be re-done; for the lawn committee must remove the plates, dishes and silverware and shake—as best they might—the soot from the tablecloths. Nice, fat, juicy soots falling from a height have a tendency to make their mark on white tablecloths. They will shake off, it is true; but the result is only a partial success and the effect inclined to be "spotty". All of which was not without

amusement to those not immediately concerned—that is to say, to the supporters present of other denominations.

One merry, laughing group observed by Long as he returned to the lawn, was "Cap" Marsden with the "Three Graces". Two of them hung on either arm and, had he possessed another, be assured it would have been at the disposal of the third. As for "Cap" himself, he was impartial. They were all dears to him, individually or collectively. On such occasions, it was first come, first served, for the favour of his arms, and the devil take the hindmost.

Then Long saw something else which made his heart go pit-a-pat. Peggy Bolton and Sybil were coming up the path from the gate. Since that wonderful afternoon when he had first met Peggy and saved her from Rex III, luck had seemed to be against him in improving upon his relationship with her. He had met her on a number of occasions, it is true, but her manner had been totally different; indeed, cool rather than friendly and intimate. As a matter of fact, however, these meetings had always been with someone else present, usually Sybil; and Long had comforted himself in the thought that a girl would act with more or less restraint under such circumstances. "Well! he would improve the shining hour now or his name was not Jimmy Long!"

He turned quickly and walked in the direction of the girls. But, before he could reach them, Sybil whispered something in her guest's ear and ran forward to meet him. She slipped her arm through his and, smiling up into his face, would not be denied. "Yes, Mr. Long, you may! You may take me to have some ice cream."

Another had seen this manœuvre and wasted not a second. "Cap" Marsden, dropping the encumbering two "Graces" like hot potatoes, was, in a dozen strides, at Peggy's side. "Miss Bolton, may I have the pleasure of escorting you to ice cream?" There was merriment in his eyes and chivalry in the manner, whilst his utilitarian right arm was offered invitingly. Peggy smiled up at him—at his six feet three inches of attractive manhood. "Thank you, Mr. Marsden," she said, and took the rascally arm.

Ah! here comes the supper at last! Just at the psychological moment—that is, when the oysters were commencing to crinkle along the edges—the stew pots had been dished up; the coffee ladled into large jugs and the tea made. Such a scurrying and bustle as people took their places at the tables! Such a hurrying back and forth of those on the lawn committee! Such haughtiness and dignity on Mrs. Slaney's face as the huge pot of tea was placed before her!

But the proof of the stew is in the eating, and once the milk-and-oyster laden spoons were raised to critical Presbyterian and Methodist mouths, the verdict was never in doubt. Mrs. McFarland gave judgment in an audible aside to her table mate and fellow member of the Presbyterian Ladies' Aid; and the pursed-up lips were not less expressive than the uttered word: "*Scorched!*" she said. And there was a general lowering of spoons.

"It was too dreadful to think about!" poor Mrs. Passman had sobbed to her husband at home that evening. "No music! Soot-spotted table cloths! And the oyster-stew scorched! I could have died of humiliation with all those Presbyterian and Metho-

dist cats turning up their noses and sneering at us. Oh! why didn't we have pan-cakes? We did think of them first, but that fat little Eva Evans—she's always thinking of her stomach—*she* put us off them. She said 'that they were filling at the time, but *slumped* awful quick!' And we—"

"There, there, my dear!" her husband had comforted her, concealing his mirth with difficulty. "It will all be forgotten in a week and it isn't worth a tear anyway."

But by far the most miserable person in Gopherburg that night was he who had no one to give comfort and who could not comfort himself—Jimmy Long. He had managed in the end to get rid of Sybil and to have Peggy all to himself for a few minutes. He had tried—tried desperately hard—to win back to the footing of their adventure together, and had even suggested another jaunt after dragonflies. The girl had turned her frank eyes upon him and replied: "I think it would be better not." Then he had asked that thing that he had set his heart upon, and which, surely, any girl might grant. "There's to be a dance this week-end, Miss Bolton—fancy dress. May I take you? Please say 'yes'!"

And Peggy had raised her brows and looked at him as if in some surprise. "Oh! thank you, Mr. Long," she had replied, "but I have already promised Mr. Marsden."

CHAPTER XIX

THE COURTS OF JUSTICE

JUSTICE is commonly represented by a female figure, blindfolded, and holding balanced scales. The scales, emblematical of weighing one side of the case against the other, appear reasonable enough, but why should the dispenser of justice be blind? To sift the truth from conflicting evidence, a judge must surely have his eyes wide open. The emblem is illogical.

On the prairies, as elsewhere, there are people to whom a stuffy law court possesses a strange attraction. They would rather sit around on the hard benches and see their fellow men fined, jailed and occasionally hanged, than enjoy the glory of a summer's morning. It is all a matter of taste. Gopherburg had the usual proportion of these exotics, and *even* the police court, with a Royal North West Mounted Police Inspector acting as magistrate, was sufficient lure; though, indeed, as an example of "blind" justice, that would take a lot of beating.

If the dispenser of justice is supposed to be unprejudiced, by what freak of legal reasoning were the police officers who ordered their constables to summon a man to court, also permitted to try him? It might be well enough at the Herschel Islands, and other remote districts where a competent man to act

as magistrate might be unobtainable, but not in Gopherburg and other thriving towns in the civilized belt.

This absence of common-sense justice led to extraordinary situations, for it was a frequent thing in those days for the Inspector-Magistrate to announce around town the evening before, the fine he intended to impose next morning. Some young men from town, say, would be caught by a constable with ducks in their rig the day prior to the opening of the shooting season. He would report to his Inspector, who would order them summoned and then tell his friends that he was "going to soak them \$10 apiece". Yes! and, in due course, keep his word. Even before an impartial judge, "ignorance of the law is no excuse", but an explanation from the young men that they had understood that 21st August was exclusive of the close season and not inclusive, might have palliated the offence and resulted in a warning or a nominal fine. One more case shall be cited. A police sergeant, taking out a gang of townsmen in a democrat to fight a prairie fire, met an old farmer driving in to town. The sergeant ordered him to turn back and join in the fire fighting. The old man said "Eh?" and drove on. The case was reported to the Inspector and that evening everyone knew the fine to be imposed—twenty dollars. An impartial magistrate would have extracted from the old farmer a very complete defense, viz: (1) that he was hastening into town for a doctor for his sick wife; (2) that he was stone deaf. The Inspector extracted nothing—except (of course) the twenty dollars. Is it to be wondered at, therefore, that only the most enthusiastic court loungers would waste their time in proceedings so barren of interest?

But to-day was the day of the big trial—Bill Bradley's trial for cattle rustling—and quite another matter. There was to be a jury. Yes! and a *real* judge in black gown and white tie. The Court-house was crowded with townsmen from all walks of life, farmers, to whom the case was of particular interest, and women in their best bibs and tuckers.

The Judge arrived promptly at 10 o'clock. "Order in Court," ordered the Sheriff and, with due dignity, the representative of the King strode to his throne and sat down.

Harry Wagstaff, Clerk of Court, called the case. "Rex versus William Bradley."

Judge Stamfordbell looked down at the counsel tables inquiringly.

"For the Crown." Pritchard, the Crown Prosecutor, belonged to a town some little distance from Gopherburg. He was a young man of fair ambition but of no particular ability. His legs were long. His bullet-shaped head small and his narrow slits of eyes and pursed-up mouth indicated his nature, both spiteful and cruel. In this respect he was inclined to exceed the wishes of the Attorney-General's Department: they desired nothing but moderation in the conduct of their cases and from Pritchard they did not get it.

"For William Bradley." It was little Charlie Duncan who rose in turn to bow slightly to the Judge.

"William Bradley, stand up," ordered the Clerk, and the homesteader rose to his feet.

The Clerk of the Court read the indictment.

"Do you plead guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty."

So the jury-men were called, sworn and filed into

their places. No exception was taken to any of the "good men and true" by either counsel. They were half and half, farmers and townsmen, and among the latter were Will Bridget and Cole Benson.

All was now set and Pritchard, for the Crown, called his first witness, "Jake Skelton".

At his side in the witness box appeared the Clerk of Court, his eyes cast on the ground. Then, suddenly, he snapped the words: "What's your name?" He could nearly always make a witness start at this unexpected question in Court procedure. Jake Skelton recovered quickly. He gave his name and swore to "tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God". "Kiss the book," ordered Harry Wagstaff, and stuck under his nose a much-kissed copy tied up with a dirty blue ribbon.

Skelton's evidence, as given in reply to the Crown Prosecutor's questions, was a simple story. He was a farmer. He had lost a yearling and, when searching for it along the line of Bradley's south boundary, the thought had occurred to him that the critter might have got through the two-strand wire fence and be hidden in the thick poplar bluff.

"And what *did* you find?"

"I found a place where the mould had been turned."

"As if something had been buried there?"

"Yes."

"What did you do then?"

"I went home and had dinner; then I drove in to town and reported to Staff-Sergeant Brown."

"Had you, some week before this date, heard the report of a rifle?" Pritchard inquired.

"Yes."

"Did it sound in the direction of Bradley's home-stead?"

"I thought so—but sound's deceiving." (A clever touch of Pritchard's, that.)

"Until you found the turned mould you had not associated the loss of your yearling with the rifle shot?"

"No."

Pritchard smiled ironically at the counsel for the defence and waved his hand in the direction of his witness.

Little Charlie Duncan rose, opened his legs to their habitual straddle attitude and put his head on one side. He was feeling the importance of his position acutely.

"Is it usual, Mr. Skelton, for farmers to search inside their neighbour's fences when an animal is lost?"

Skelton hesitated. "I don't see why they shouldn't."

"You don't, eh?"

"No."

"It did not occur to you that you were trespassing?"

"No."

"It did not occur to you to go up to Bradley's house and inquire if he had seen anything of your yearling on his place?"

"No."

"And yet, up to that time—you admitted so two or three minutes ago—you had not suspected Mr. Bradley as having had anything to do with your loss?"

"No."

"Humph!" Charlie Duncan's scorn was unutterable.

Some of the farmers present evidently did not think much of Jake Skelton's ethics, either. There was an angry murmur.

"Order in Court," bellowed the Sheriff.

"Now with regard to the rifle shot that you state you heard——"

"What of it?" Skelton interrupted.

"I'm not answering your questions, Skelton—you are answering mine! It's a game country up there where your farm and Mr. Bradley's are located, is it not?"

"Yes, there's deer and moose and bear."

"Then rifle shots would be heard quite often in your district?"

"Yes—in the open season."

Charlie Duncan was not a big game hunter and all seasons were alike to him—he had slipped up there. "Yes, yes, I know," he recovered himself quickly, "but even in the close season a rifle shot would not be anything unusual?"

The witness hesitated; he must be careful. "No, you sometimes hear them."

"What direction is Bradley's place from yours?"

"North-west."

"You say that you thought the shot came from that direction?"

"Yes."

"You would not swear that it did not come from south-east?"

"N-no."

"That's all!" announced Charlie Duncan, and sat down.

"Corporal Smith." Pritchard put his other star witness in the box.

It is needless to follow the witness's evidence in detail, as the wretched story was duly extracted. After Skelton had laid the information, he had been ordered by his senior officer to investigate the supposed burial place and he had done so. He had found the hide, head and other offal of the yearling—later identified by Skelton under oath as belonging to his lost one. It had been shot. He had then, as instructed, gone to Bradley's shack to arrest him, but had not found him there. He had found him, however, in a disused shanty north of the river and had brought him back to town.

"Did he resist arrest?" Pritchard questioned.

"No," replied Corporal Smith.

"Was he armed—had he a revolver or rifle with him?"

"Yes—he had a rifle."

"But he didn't resist arrest?"

The angry retort on Tommy Smith's lips was saved by the Judge: "Mr. Pritchard, the witness has already testified to the effect that the prisoner did *not*."

Pritchard bowed sullen acknowledgment to the correction. "Very well, that will do, Corporal Smith." He glanced up to the bench. "The Crown rests," and sat down.

It was now Charlie Duncan's turn. He rose and smiled at Tommy Smith, still in the witness box. "You can step down, Corporal." Then he turned to the Judge. "I intend putting William Bradley in the box in his own defense."

There was a stir in Court as the sturdy homesteader was sworn and, since the truth usually hangs together pretty well, so did his story:

His name was William Bradley and he was a homesteader living some eighteen miles north of Gopherburg. He had not seen a stray yearling on his place—much less shot one. He had shot at something? “Yes, a cow moose.” Possibly it was this shot Jake Skelton had heard? “Maybe.” He could not produce evidence of the moose having been killed since he had thrown the remains into the Saskatchewan river. Why? “Moose was out of season—and it was a female.” It was for the same reason, when word had reached him that the police were coming, that he had left home? “Yes.”

From this story Pritchard, in cross-examination, could not budge him. To his question, “Your excuse, I suppose, for killing a cow moose out of season would be that you needed meat for your family?” produced the retort:

“Yes! Are not my women folk more to me than a moose?”

There was a buzz of anger, and the Sheriff had to bellow for “Order in Court”.

Pritchard would have liked to hark back to the rifle, and whether the homesteader had suffered himself to be arrested without resistance, but he dare not—the Judge had already snubbed him on that point.

Duncan put Lucy Bradley in the box, and very pretty she looked, though her thoughtful blue eyes reflected her present anxiety of mind. She corroborated her brother’s evidence as to moose meat and denied that they had other fresh meat at that time. The Crown Prosecutor could get no satisfaction out of her.

Three witnesses testified to William Bradley’s good character.

Charlie Duncan in turn bowed to the Judge and took his seat.

Judge Stamfordbell looked at the Court-house clock, which read "12 o'clock"; pulled out his watch to confirm the evidence and took in the learned counsel and jurymen with a sweeping glance. "I think, gentlemen," he said, "it were better to reserve the address of counsel for this afternoon's session." He paused a moment, implying that if anyone dared to question his good taste in such a matter, now was the time to speak or forever hold his peace, and rose to his feet.

Everyone else did likewise.

CHAPTER XX.

THE COURTS OF JUSTICE

JUDGE STAMFORDBELL had given orders that his lunch should be served in his chambers and, as he stalked out of the stuffy Court Room and entered the said chambers adjoining, he threw off with his black robe the traditional dignity of the bench and became an ordinary mortal again.

When Harry Wagstaff, his trusty Clerk of Court, joined him two minutes later, he found him as he had anticipated—for the occurrence was not unusual—sitting beside a bottle of whisky anxiously awaiting his arrival.

"What we need, Wag, me boy, is an appetizer, and for my part—murmur it not in Gath—'I need it bloody bad'!"

These two had journeyed together on occasion into the northern wilds, administering the law, and the good fellowship of the road existed between them. It is impossible to share verminous beds, wet blankets and "red-eye" whisky with a companion for some weeks at a time and keep him at arm's length—no, not even if you happen to be a judge of the Supreme Court. As for the idiomatic degree of the Judge's need, as expressed in his final words, *that* was a joke between them. It was a pet saying of a lanky Englishman with whom they had fraternized up

north—and it had tickled the Judge's humour.

The distressing state of mind, thus jocularly alluded to, was partially removed by appetizer number one, but number two completed the good work and, by the time the meal was brought in, the learned Jurist was at peace with all the world. So much so, in fact, that Wagstaff—who had an invitation to lunch with friends in town—ostentatiously corked the bottle and replaced it in the Judge's black bag. What he should have done was to have locked the bag and taken away the key.

At 1 o'clock the court room was again crowded to suffocation and the prisoner was back in his dock. The Sheriff—a retired farmer now enjoying immunity from work due to having once (unsuccessfully) contested a seat for his party—strutted around trying to keep order.

At 1.15 the Clerk of Court returned from his luncheon invitation and, pulling a newspaper from his pocket, lounged back in his chair and read.

At 1.30 the door from the Judge's chambers opened and the anxiously awaited figure stood on the threshold.

"Order in Court!" roared the Sheriff and in the confusion the representative of the King resumed his throne. He nodded in the direction of the Crown Prosecutor.

Pritchard's great moment had arrived! He had been awaiting it. He would show these people where they got off; these people who had not yet heard him—who dared to titter at the Judge's correction. Everything he had read in his books on oratory, including gesticulations, should go into his speech. He moved over to the long coop where "the good

men and true" were penned together to hear him.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he began, "it will be for you gentlemen to decide—as the learned Judge will presently direct you—whether the prisoner, Bradley, did or did not shoot his neighbour's yearling steer, and dispose of its remains by burial—the offence of which he is accused. I now crave your closest attention while I review for your consideration the evidence in the case given at this morning's session."

Judge Stamfordbell, at this stage in the proceedings, was really a secondary figure; for, since counsel was addressing the jury and not him, his duty consisted solely in "listening in", just to see that nothing was "put over" by counsel contrary to the rules of the game. His attitude, however, far from being one of indifference, denoted the closest attention. His elbows were astraddle on the desk before him and his fingers covered his eyes. Intense thought and concentration alone could require such a posture. It was the very personification of blind justice. All it lacked was the scales.

"I will take first," Pritchard continued, "the evidence for the Crown. Mr. Skelton, a respectable farmer—and doubtless well known to you gentlemen—loses a yearling steer. He searches for it—what farmer would not?—and, by the merest off chance, finds what looks like a burial spot in a neighbour's woods. He reports his find to the Mounted Police and investigation proves his worst doubts. There, beneath the newly turned mould, Corporal Smith found the head, hide and hooves. Moreover, the bullet hole in the hide showed how the creature had

been done to death. Did the accused own a rifle? Was it his custom to carry one? The evidence, Gentlemen of the Jury," (he banged his fist on the table beside him), "showed that he *did*, and it *was!*"

If the reader has been under the impression that the Judge's intense attitude really denoted attention to the Crown Prosecutor's address, there is no alternative but to correct such an impression forthwith. Judge Stamfordbell was asleep and, at this stage in Pritchard's oration, dreaming. He was wandering across the prairie arm-in-arm with a young squaw who had just produced a bottle of whisky from the folds of her blankets, and, out of the kindness of her heart, had offered him a drink. Then a farmer-man (a burly fellow) had bobbed up from somewhere and had snatched at the bottle. The young squaw had screamed, and run away—doing him, of course, out of his drink! He could see her running pin-toed in her moccasined feet, holding the precious bottle out in front of her and screaming, and the infamous farmer-man (the burly fellow) following. Then the scene changed and he was on the Atlantic on the old *Ionian*. As he lay in his berth, he could feel the ship rolling to the billows—a nauseating swaying that made his head swim and gave him a wobbly feeling in the pit of his stomach. But *fear* also was present, for the air had been cold that day and rumours of *ice* clutched the hearts of timid passengers. What a death! Thrown into the chilly waters and trying to stick one's finger-nails into the slippery iceberg! Clutching and scratching, until one died!

"Now, take the evidence of the defense," Pritchard urged. "What a lame tale it is! A flat denial on the part of the accused. One who pleads 'not guilty'

naturally denies the offense! And even his own story that he had shot a cow moose out of season and had run away terrified at his act—while unacceptable as a defense—showed that he did not hesitate to set at naught the laws of the country—that he would, in fact, do anything for a supply of meat. As to the evidence of the accused's sister—he did not wish to impute anything against the young woman—but they, the gentlemen of the jury, must not overlook the fact that she *was* his sister. Further, every man was an honest one until the contrary proved to be the case, so that the testimony regarding the accused's character really amounted to nothing." He "wound up" for the final effort.

"I ask you, gentlemen of the jury, to find the accused 'guilty'. The offense, cattle rustling, is one too serious in a mixed farming district such as this to be treated lightly. It is an insidious crime, striking at the very heart of our social fabric. Heed it not! and the structure totters on its foundation. Totters! I warn you—and crumbles about our heads!" Pritchard gave a final wide sweep with his right hand, and knocked over a glass water-jug and two tumblers.

Crash!

To the sleeping Judge, the worst had happened. The ship *had* struck an iceberg! Fright awakened him. What were they gaping at him for—these people!—with their fool staring eyes? He must be trying a case? Yes, that was it. But what case? Instinctively his eyes turned to the prisoners' dock. He started, surprised and relieved. Ah! the farmer man (the burly fellow) who had snatched at the squaw girl's bottle. He could see her *now*, running

with her toes turned in—and screaming. He would teach the fellow to play a dirty trick like that! and gave sentence in a loud voice: "*Three months!*"

Bewilderment reigned supreme. Something surely was wrong! Men turned to their neighbours to ask whispered questions. A girl giggled hysterically.

As for Charlie Duncan, he was, for a moment, speechless. The Judge, at a jury trial, had sentenced his client before—Ye Gods!—before he had given his address in defense!

He rose spluttering, as from an icy plunge, waving his arms above his head. "But, My Lord, I protest—" was as far as he got.

With a bound, Harry Wagstaff, trusty Clerk of Court, was at the Judge's side. He turned his back to the assemblage and spoke terse words: "You're drunk. Say you're sick. Adjourn Court."

Judge Stamfordbell did not argue. He raised his hand for order. "I am indisposed—a touch of sun. I adjourn Court until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning."

And, with the Clerk of Court on one side and the Sheriff on the other, he was hustled out of sight.

* * * * *

Bill Bradley's chances had not improved by the unusual incident of the previous afternoon's session. For one thing, this had resulted in the jury-men being locked up all night, which is not calculated to improve a man's good nature, even, when collectively, they were "good men and true". Further, the last words in their ears before isolation were those of the

Crown Prosecutor, with no arguments to leaven them in the way of defense from the other side.

So, when the Judge put in his appearance at 10 o'clock and nodded to Charlie Duncan to indicate that he had the floor, the little lawyer had a hard row to hoe.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he began nervously, "my learned friend, in his address to you yesterday, advanced a line of argument of *apparent* plausibility. But, in a Court of Law, the justice handed out to the accused must be based on something more substantial than plausibility, or our jails would be filled with innocent men.

"If you will sift the facts of the case, the only one really worthy of a moment's thought as pointing to Mr. Bradley as the guilty party, is that the remains of the yearling were found buried on his land. But does it follow *consequently*, gentlemen, that Bradley was the man who put them there? That is the question! It could be explained in several ways. Some other party guilty of the deed had chosen that Bradley's land should hold the damning offal rather than his own. Transients, passing through, might have killed the beast for meat, and disposed of the remains without even knowing on whose land they buried them. Or, again, it might have been the spiteful act of someone who wished Bradley ill. Let me cite a somewhat similar case. Tom Jones loses his cat and the carcase, with the throat cut, is found in my ash-barrel. Question: did I kill the cat? Would you, as highly intelligent men, hold me guilty of the dastardly deed because the slayer of the cat had selected my ash barrel? The supposition is absurd.

"Again, the fact that the yearling was shot, and that Bradley owns a rifle, has no corroborative bearing against the accused. In a country of big game and bears, virtually all farmers have rifles. So, returning to my supposititious case of the cat, it would be like saying that I *must* have killed the cat because I owned a carving knife. Ridiculous!

"My learned friend also urged—and not with any too good taste—that need of meat actuated the crime. The imputation is cruel, unnecessarily cruel, in a country where poverty among struggling homesteaders is all too common. But the point, gentlemen, I ask you to consider, is that he failed to prove that the Bradley family have had any beef meat. Miss Lucy Bradley swore that salt pork and moose were the only meat they had eaten for several months past. And, in spite of the Crown Prosecutor's implication that she committed perjury on her brother's behalf, I ask you, you who know the girl, to believe her testimony.

"With regard to Bradley's admission that he was guilty of killing a cow moose out of season, I crave the Court's generosity of vision. This was not the act of a hunter killing for sport, but of a homesteader providing for his family. In a country but partially opened up, the law, in such a case, may well be tempered with humanity.

"The rifle shot that Jake Skelton yesterday *swore* that he heard, and *thought* to have been in the direction of Bradley's homestead, might have been the one that killed the moose, or again, might have been any of the hundred and one shots to be heard in a new district. It could not be admitted as real evidence

in connection with the killing of the yearling.

"As to the action of the man I am proud to defend, in leaving home when he heard that the police were after him, I ask you, gentlemen of the jury, each to consider this matter in a personal way. We men are none of us perfect, and, if we search our hearts, we know there are acts in our lives—yes! one and all of us—upon which our conscience is not altogether clear. We would," he looked towards the Judge as if for divine confirmation, "rather than be brought to task for the act, however trivial, flee shamefaced. And so it was with Bradley. He had killed a moose contrary to the law and, without any knowledge of the more serious crime laid against him, had," Charlie Duncan tried to throw an air of casualness into his pleading, "skipped while the skipping was good.

"Gentlemen of the jury, I will not abuse your patience by enlarging upon the defense I have submitted and to which you have given me your attention so closely. I could tell you of Bradley's circumstances; of his young wife and baby but a few weeks old, of the consequences to the family should the bread-winner be found guilty. But this were sentiment! and the law does not permit of sentiment, nor, in all truth, does the defense require, in this case, what the law does not allow.

"The Crown has sought, on the flimsiest of circumstantial evidence, to saddle an honest man with a heinous crime. In actuality, it has proved absolutely nothing!—has not substantiated one single link in associating Bradley with the deed.

"I ask you, gentlemen of the jury, to find the homesteader, William Bradley, 'not guilty'."

Pritchard, for the Crown, was permitted his "come back"; but beyond sneering at Charlie Duncan's "very earnest effort", he had not much to add to his previous oration.

The Judge then instructed the Jury and, after the manner of judges, blew "hot" and "cold" alternately. "It was *their* duty to decide as to the guilt of the accused upon the evidence submitted. *If* they were agreed that he had committed the offence, *then* they must bring in a verdict of 'guilty'. *But* if they had any reasonable doubts as to his guilt, *then* they must bring in a verdict of 'not guilty'. *But* the offence in this case, that of killing another man's yearling was—as the Crown Prosecutor had pointed out—a serious matter and they must not lightly, etc."

Given enough judicial "ifs" and "buts" and "ands" and the average mortal (juries are composed of such) becomes confused past confusion. They do not know what the devil to do. If, as in this case, their sympathies are with the accused, God knows they would like to find him "not guilty". But the Judge's last sentence had begun with a "but"—or that was the impression. And there they were!

They (the jury) were herded out of Court to the place provided, and Judge Stamfordbell stalked to his chamber to await the result of their deliberations.

Twenty-three minutes later, the Jury returned to their coop and the Judge stalked back again.

Said Judge Stamfordbell in his even, dignified voice: "Gentlemen of the jury, are you ready with your verdict?"

Will Bridget, as foreman, rose. "Yes," he said.

"Do you find the prisoner 'guilty' or 'not guilty'?"

"We find him," Bridget hated to say the word,
"Guilty—we recommend mercy."

Judge Stamfordbell put on his glasses and turned his eyes, thus aided, to the prisoners' dock. "William Bradley, a jury of your peers has found you 'guilty' of the offence of which you are accused—a serious offence, I may add, in a community such as this. In view of the recommendation for mercy, I will not impose the maximum penalty as provided by the law. I sentence you to *one year* in Prince Albert penitentiary."

And a woman—a poorly clad woman, clutching a tiny baby to her breast—gave a choking cry and sank forward on the counsels' table, sobbing out her broken heart.

CHAPTER XXI.

A FANCY DRESS DANCE

WHAT a mighty good thing it is that one half of the world does not know how the other half lives—or *feels*. If this were not so, could there be any content or happiness for any one? It would seem impossible. The load of the afflicted would pull down the average to the point of unbearableness. But a merciful Providence spares us this. We all have our ups and downs, our terms of suffering and our times of joyousness. And the old world wags merrily on.

In the preceding chapters, the wretched events have been set out culminating in the imprisonment of an innocent homesteader. Imagine the unspeakable grief of the Bradley family; their home broken up and two poor women and a little baby driven to take shelter with a relative not much better off than themselves. As for Bill Bradley himself, sturdy, hardworking, brave and determined to the point of obstinacy, he had given up the fight. Tommy Smith had done his best with him after his friend was sentenced. “But, Bill,” he had protested, “you only lack ten days to complete your duties. Let your wife and Lucy stay on, and we’ll get a lawyer to work on ‘proving up’ for you and getting patent for your homestead.”

"No!" Bradley had replied savagely. "I'm through. Get the women to the wife's sister's place —she'll care for them. When I get out, we'll go back east."

"Surely you're not going to abandon the place?"

Cruelly wronged, humiliated, and his home wrecked, the man's ambition was dead. He would sacrifice everything now—home, hopes and four years of toil and privation. "Yes!" he said bitterly, "I'll do no more."

* * * * *

And right on top of grief such as this came the long-looked-forward-to Fancy Dress Dance in aid of the hospital. For weeks past the Gopherburgian fair sex had been ransacking their brains and wardrobes for suitable costumes, and, thereafter, stitched, and stitched, and stitched. Moreover, this was where the girls with beaux had an opportunity to reciprocate for multitudinous ice-creams and other favours. His costume need not be fussy, it is true, but he must have *something* to go in—or how could he take her?

Long would willingly have shunned the dance altogether, for the thought of Peggy going with "Cap" Marsden was hateful—something he had been trying to forget. Jealous? Yes! He was honest enough with himself to admit that. But there was more than jealousy behind his resentment, and if Peggy had been his sister, or any other nice girl, it would have been the same: it was the man's attitude towards women. A detestable thought this! for in the first place, he liked Marsden and, up to a certain point regarded him as a friend, and in the second, he might as well have been bound and gagged for any

action he might take to remedy such a situation. To breathe one word of warning, directly or indirectly, were skulking and disloyal to sex—impossible! It is a poisonous problem of man's making, this one; and men, having failed to solve it, have aped the bees with a putrescent corpse in the hive. They have built a wall around it—and covered it up. The motto is: "Think what you like and regret it if you want to—but don't expose it to the air."

Finally he had decided to face the music—to put in an appearance if only for appearances' sake. Possibly, after all, he was unduly pessimistic with regard to Peggy. But then, again, that first afternoon she had been so natural, had seemed to understand him, and to like his companionship. Could she have resented his good-bye—that little caress of her hand? She had noticed it, for she had flushed. But she had smiled at him and that without reproof. No girl could be such a prude, surely, as to resent that? The thing was absurd! Her money, then? Would a girl of private means consider the financial aspect, and discountenance a suitor who could not match his pile against her's? That would be a logical explanation for choking him off and bestowing her favours on "Cap" Marsden. But, plausible as it sounded, it was a beastly thought!—sordid!—revolting!—when all he wanted was her love. Well! he would go anyway. He would give his love affair one more chance. And, if his luck was still out, he would blot all thought of her from his mind.

The Gopherburg hall was a large room over the blacksmith's shop and, when a dance was to be held, the floor was strengthened for the occasion by some heavy vertical timbers in the forge below. In the

winter, heat in the dance hall was supplied by a stove. But, since this is no longer required once the dancers are heated up—not to mention being very much in the way—the practice was to remove it piece-meal. That is to say, while some willing helpers pulled off the tin smoke-stack and carried it down the outside fire-escape, others, putting two-by-fours beneath the base, did likewise by the stove. The accommodating heating apparatus, thus removed, was then left to cool itself off in the snow.

Long had timed his entrance subsequent to the first dance, for, if he could not take Peggy, he certainly was not going to hunt around for another partner.

The hall was lighted by coal-oil lamps, for electricity had not as yet reached Gopherburg, but, if the illumination was primitive, so was the music. Two Swedes officiated on these occasions, and, in lieu of a piano (which could not be got up the stairs) an atrocious little harmonium served. The balance of the orchestra was a squeaky fiddle.

"Take your ladies for a quadrille," shouted the Master of Ceremonies from the orchestra platform. And the young men claimed their partners.

A quadrille! What is it? Oh! it is a square dance, and was very popular once upon a time. But, like the old woman who lived in a shoe, it had so many figures no one knew what to do. To get over the difficulty a Master of Ceremonies—usually selected for his supposed expert knowledge of the figures—called them off in a sing-song whine. That is, he directed the dancers step by step something after this fashion, at least, it was such fragments as these that came to Long's ears above the scuffle and

babble of the dancers: "Bow to your partner—Shassez to the right—Swing your ladies—Ala main left—Birdie fly out—Birdie fly in—Swing your corners—Ala main right—Lady round lady, and gent around gent—Lady round lady, and gent don't go." Which, of course, made the thing comparatively easy—for those who knew what he meant!

The next item—so the programme on the wall indicated—would be a two-step and Long looked round for Peggy. But a fair-haired girl in harem trousers threw herself into his arms with charming abandon and dancing eyes. "Why, do you *know*, Mr. Long," declared the irrepressible Sybil, "we've never had a dance together!"

"We couldn't very well—could we—Miss Thurston, seeing that this is the first dance in Gopherburg since I've been here?" The words were spoken gravely, as if logic was the thing her being craved.

But Sybil cared nothing for logic, and ignored it. "And I simply love your costume," she complimented. "What is it?"

"It's a Viking," Long replied. It had been made for him three years before for a big masquerade dance in Toronto, and he had packed it around in his trunk against just such emergency as the present. It suited his athletic figure excellently. The winged hat, sandal boots and barbarous colour scheme were symbolic, it is true, of a dead past, but on Long they did not look out of place, like discarded raiment from a second-hand shop—the trouble with most fancy dress costumes.

Then the perspiring Swedes ground out on their respective instruments their understanding of a two-step time. The air—and the word is used with

hesitation—never varied throughout the evening for quadrille, two-step or waltz; only the time changed to meet the exigencies of the case.

Long, of course, had no alternative. Sybil had grabbed him and he must dance with her; nor, with Peggy Bolton out of his thoughts, could he have wished for a more charming partner! He put his arm round her and off they went. In those days—before modern steps and ideas revolutionized things—dancing was much less—shall we say—intimate. Sybil, however, had not only learned to dance well, but, being a bright girl, had anticipated the future and gave herself to her partner wholeheartedly. So when their dance ended and Sybil, stroking her partner's bare arm apparently unconsciously, pleaded: "You will ask me for some more—won't you?" Long could not imagine a reason why he should *not* wish to. "Of course!" he responded.

Peggy Bolton, dressed in a Grecian white-robed effect, had danced the two-step with Marsden, a tall and terrible Mephisto. They were sitting out the interval when Long bore down upon them and asked Peggy for the next—a waltz. The girl greeted him with evident pleasure and, the Swede orchestra starting up, he took her into his arms for the first time. They were good dancers and even the atrocious music could not spoil the rhythm of their movement. As a matter of fact, Long ignored it, making his own time and Peggy followed. People turned to watch the couple, for their costumes matched admirably and they were good to look upon. Long did not want to talk during that dance, that could come later. He wanted to feel Peggy close to him—to fool himself into forgetting his hurt.

Before he left her, he bespoke two more dances. "The twelfth and seventeenth are waltzes, Miss Bolton," he told her. "May I have those?"

"Thank you, Mr. Long, I enjoyed that one!—but you will have to remember the numbers, I shall never be able to keep track without a programme."

"Never fear! I'll look to that," he assured her.

The costumes, on the whole, were excellent, for this event had been advertised by the Hospital Aid Society long in advance and those unable to make something suitable themselves, or, in the case of the young men, have their mothers or the girls make them, had sent away to Prince Albert. Sally Jack, Peg Benson and Dora Quigley—"Cap" Marsden's "Three Graces"—had gone to infinite pains for this occasion. That is to say, they displayed the maximum of personality with the minimum of material.

In contradistinction to their own costumes was the one they had designed and made for Charles Dunston, remittance man, and sometime dealer in horse-flesh. This character has been squeezed out of our story since the sale of the nag leading to his introduction to Long, not that he had never been in to town since—he owed something to a thirst such as his! but because other matter has had right of way. He shall now receive attention.

Charles Dunston had, by arrangement, reported to Mrs. Benson in the living quarters over the store at 5 P.M., dressed, according to his wont, in shooting coat with leather gun strappings, riding breeches and his chin adorned with the usual red-pointed beard. Here the "Three Graces" had fallen upon him and worked the transformation. Subsequent local gossip did not actually associate the ladies with the "tub-

bing" of Dunston on that occasion, but when he appeared at the dance, bathed, shaved and in Nun's dress, he was certainly a credit to their ingenuity.

Dunston, in his relationship to the "Three Graces" lives and loves, occupied the unique position of second fiddle to Marsden. "Cap" was their beau ideal of a dashing cavalier to flirt with, but, failing him—why! by all means, the understudy! Of course, one penalty of sharing a man of generous views like Marsden is that the numerical option is in the man. They, the parties of the second part, may be satisfied with, say, a limit of three: a family affair more or less. But will the man submit to such limitations? Not he! The flock is his, and the privilege of adding to its numbers must rest with him and the material available, as witness Marsden's dropping of "The Graces" at the oyster social to cultivate the latest in femininity, as witness his leaving "them" on this occasion and permitting Miss Bolton to monopolize his wing.

The rights of taking Peg Benson and Dora Quigley had in consequence fallen to the lot of Dunston; and that they had chosen for him the character of a Nun was their idea of humour. The husbands? In both cases they were older than their wives, and cared not a rap for dances. Cole Benson had been permitted to see Dunston when the dressing was completed and had chuckled with amusement. Said he, thumbs stuck through his suspenders and his fat hands resting on his paunch: "Who'd have thought, Charlie, you packed a white complexion under that red beard? Oh! it's good—real clever! Well! have a good time, Peg, old girl," he told his wife. They understood each other perfectly.

The third of the triumvir of Graces, Sally Jack, had taken her husband. Or, put another way, he had announced that he intended to "take it in", and she had made the best of it and costumed him appropriately. When they arrived on the dance floor, a shout of glee had greeted them. Monty Jack was the Cannibal King. A skin-tight suit of B.V.D.'s skillfully dyed, gave the appearance of black nakedness save for the small black bear-skin about his loins. He carried a tufted spear and wore a large ring in his nose. To add to the humour of the thing, the natural skinniness of his legs gave the impression that the food supply had been insufficient. He was, admittedly, a scream! Throughout the proceedings, presumably to avoid the danger of taking a chill, the Cannibal King repaired to the dressing room and took a snort from the flask in his overcoat pocket. And his spirits rose, it might have been noted, as the stock in the flask sank.

As Peggy's escort, Marsden could "give her a rush", could take dances, that is, pretty well *ad lib*, but even so he could not over-do it; which left him with ample of unfilled items for the old flock. And that is where the magnanimity of "Cap" Marsden came in! So far from permitting the new attraction to absorb his attention, he could still give himself, in the available intervals, to boisterous enjoyment of the old, and in just the same old spirit. His size alone made him a conspicuous figure at a dance, but his heart was young and he did not give a damn for anything or anybody. With any of the "Three Graces", for instance, his antics approached familiarity—privilege! But the Gopherburgians knew "Cap" Marsden and *them*, and only smiled.

To Long, the wait for the twelfth dance, when he would have Peggy to himself again, seemed like eternity in spite of Sybil and the other charmers with whom he must necessarily fill the interval. Sybil, it is true, saw to it that he lived up to his promise generously, and poor "Parky" Newlands (whom she had condescendingly permitted to take her) knew again the devils of jealousy. Sybil, to do her credit, did her work skillfully, alluringly—if a shade too conspicuously. A girl, at a dance, can let herself go a bit; can smile into her partner's eyes with dreamy languor and, if his arm is bare, stroke it with soft fingers. But she cannot stroke it unconsciously more than once. And she might avoid doing it in the middle of the room. Long did not exactly find her dances dull, she took good care he should not, but he remembered that evening early in the spring when he had escaped her enchantment by a close margin, and he hated publicity anyhow.

When number twelve did come along, Peggy appeared as glad as he and her reserve seemed to have disappeared. This sort of a dance was quite a new experience to her and while its environments interested her, the uncouth aspects: the Cannibal King—now decidedly showing the effects of his 'snorts'—and, indeed, her own escort's somewhat gauche antics, gave her a feeling of timidity. She even voiced her doubts to Long respecting the latter, watching his face the while with sidelong glance. "Mr. Long, does Captain Marsden always behave like this at a dance?" And Long, steadyng his voice to betray neither himself nor his sex, replied: "Oh, yes, in these small places everybody knows everybody. They lay themselves out for a good

time." Poor Long! The thought came to him that at least she might question someone else than him on the subject of Marsden.

It was after their next and final dance, the seventeenth, however, that Long could stand the suspense no longer. He had led her to a seat at the back of the low platform near the wall, and they were out of ear-shot of the nearest couple, midst that babble of voices. Peggy was smiling—adorable! and seemed happy to be there with him.

"Miss Bolton," he said, "you remember that first afternoon when we met. Why have you never been the same—so *altogether* different, whenever we have met—since?"

Peggy's face flushed and she half raised her hand.

But Long was set on his purpose and did not even note the restraining hand. "Surely you understand?" he pleaded. "You must know that I love you——"

Distress discernible in her eyes and with trembling lips, Peggy stood up. "Oh, no, Mr. Long, not—now you have spoiled it all!"

Long had sprung to his feet simultaneously, and now stood looking at her with blazing eyes.

"Please. Oh, please!" the girl begged, and put out her arm to be taken back to the dance floor.

And it was just at this juncture that the thing happened. To get the "why" of it, we must put the clock back fifteen minutes to when Monty Jack, the Cannibal King, having finished his flask and, in the course of looking for his wife, had opened the door from the hall onto the little fire-escape landing. Here he had found Sally receiving comfort—it is to be hoped not too worldly—in the arms of the Nun.

Befoozled as to his brain, the Cannibal King had closed the door again quietly, but, by the time of the couple's reappearance, he had got things straightened out and his course of action decided upon. He let them advance well into the lamp-light in the middle of the hall, and then, with a barbarous war cry, charged down upon the Nun with his spear and jabbed him playfully in the chest.

The severity of the jab is still in doubt, but the *result* was instantaneous. Dunston responded with a straight right to the jaw. And next second they were at it, tooth and nail.

Hurt, and heart-broken beyond words by Peggy's refusal even to listen to him, Long had only got her back to the floor in time to witness this beastly fracas! Angry with her! himself! the fighting fools! everything! a perfect *berserk* rage took possession of the heart beneath the Viking's robes. Dropping Peggy's arm with the curt direction, "Better get Marsden to take you home!" he sprang at the fighters with a yell. "Stop it—you beasts!" he ordered. And, taking the warring pair by the scruff of their necks, he tore them apart, and hurled them in opposite directions.

CHAPTER XXII.

"DAGO" PETE

"DAGO" PETE was striding north with the business-like swing of one with a long way to go. He had left Gopherburg at 4.30 A.M. after a hasty snack in lieu of breakfast, and he had been covering the miles ever since to the tune of three and a half to the hour. In men, as in race horses, the big ones are the sprinters and the little ones the long distance winners, and Pete was true to type.

The little Galician, judging by his behaviour, was in excellent spirits. His head was held high, and his bronzed face was again and again lighted by a smile. Occasionally he broke into a song, the words of which were in his own tongue, or rather in an early form of it now dead except in the folk-songs of his people. Over and over again, as verse followed verse, the unmistakable haunting melody flowed forth. It was the love-ballad Long and Corporal Smith had overheard from the cupola of the gravel train, with its final stanza of abnegation:—

*"My Love is not for me,
For I am lowly;
Yet would I happily
Live for her wholly:
Pure is her heart and true
As skies above her,
O! but her eyes are blue—
Wherefore I love her."*

From Pete's lips, the words were strangely appropriate, for, though his life had been rough and his surroundings squalid, he had never sunk to beastliness in any form. He was at heart a child. Lucy he loved, it is true, with human passion, but he had never pressed his suit—never worried the girl. He would not do that. Enough that she was his blue-eyed goddess, to be worshipped from afar. More he could not expect—or ask of her.

But to-day was a holiday, a day stolen from shovelling gravel under railway ties and other drudgery of the section gang. A little picnic all to himself with the song-sparrows and meadow-larks and the beauties of nature. And, if he broke in upon the warbling of feathered songsters now and again with little carols of his own, he did not think that they would mind, and they *might* understand.

At 10 A.M. he came to the gate leading into the Bradley homestead, but he kept straight on without turning his head. Ten minutes later, he passed through the northern gate and arrived shortly after at the ford. Here he turned left again, along the river shore, until a large gravel bed was reached. This was his objective.

Disappearing into a dense patch of willow brush under the high river bank, Pete returned bearing a small pick, shovel and gold pan. These he carried out onto the gravel bar, smiling to himself in happy anticipation. At his “prospect”—the excavation to rock-bottom made on his previous trip—he took off his coat and started to work in earnest.

The procedure was simple. First the loosening up of the gravel with the pick, and then shovelling the deposit from the rock bed into the pan. Using

ample water to wash the contents, he rocked the pan sideways and with a rotary motion. Now the heavy upper stones were cleaned out, and so on, swilling and reducing, down to the ultimate residue. This was viewed with critical care. Gold?—not a suspicion of “colour”! He shook his head and smiled.

If prospectors were not optimists of the very highest order in respect to their calling, there would be no mineral production, for it is a wearisome, heart-breaking business—a gamble at best. But Pete was an enthusiast. He loved it as a hobby, and, in shovelling and washing panful after panful, he was enjoying himself—having the time of his life.

Small, round, brown pebbles were occasionally lifted from the pan individually, examined and weighed in the palm of his hand, only to be thrown away. He had found them in the Yukon, placer mining for gold some years before, and even there few knew what they were, even when they saw the real thing—tin. But, no, he must not expect them here in this river!

An expert, and muscular, Pete could wash six pans to the hour, but he gave it up at last without reward, and still smiling. All things considered, he had had a lovely time! He turned the pan bottom up and, sitting on it, had his lunch: bread and cheese and onions. Then he produced “the makings” from his coat pocket and rolled a brown-papered cigarette and, smoking thus luxuriously, viewed the hole before him—his “prospect”.

Returning to the river shore proper, Pete turned west toward the creek mouth and kept well in under the steep bank rising twenty-five feet or so perpendicularly above his head. As he walked along, he

glanced up at it from time to time as might a fossil-hunter searching its face for million-year-old dinosaurs; occasionally, again, he struck an interesting looking boulder a sharp blow with his pick. And so, in due course, he came to where the bank broke sharply into a blind V-shaped gully. Pete had never explored this, and the thought occurred to him to do so now.

The break in the regular contour of the steep bank would, he figured, be due to a spring of water or other natural cause in the distant past effecting the erosion. The agent, whatever it may have been, would wear away the softer deposit and its action would cease either by the resistance of a harder deposit, or removal of the cause.

He advanced up the gully to about half its length to where the ground, rising to the apex, reduced the cliff-face to about twelve feet. Here he threw down his gold pan and shovel and examined the surface of the bank, a blue-grey clay. Standing close up, to reach the highest point possible, he swung the pick behind him and drove it in with all his strength.

The effect was immediate, indeed, surprising, for the surface in front of him to the depth of some ten inches and a width of four or five feet crumbled and fell in a cloud of dust, knocking Pete over backwards and half smothering him. He got up and shook himself like a dog. Quite unperturbed by the accident, he looked up casually to see the result of his blow.

For thirty seconds, little Pete stood rooted, his lower jaw dropped and his eyes fairly bulging out of his head. Then he turned and looked about him, thinking quickly. Ah! the very thing! an up-rooted

spruce tree lying on its side under the bank across the spit. It was still green and must have blown over that spring; in fact, he could see the cavity in the bank above, with broken roots protruding. He scurried over and raised the root end to get the heft of it. Yes! he could manage! Seizing it again, he walked backwards, pulling and grunting with exertion—a human ant struggling with a coveted object absurdly too large for it. Foot by foot it came, the smooth up-turned branches sliding over the sod.

At the base of the bank, immediately beneath the exposed surface, he halted the root end and, stepping back, got in close to the trunk. Now, lifting, and indifferent to grazing twigs, he raised his screen to the perpendicular as one raises a ladder, hand under hand. "Ya!" he said, and toppled it over into place. He viewed the effect appraisingly from thirty feet back, and laughed. It would have created no suspicion in the mind of a stray visitor to the gully, even at close range. The soil at the base only added to the illusion. It gave the appearance of having been dislodged when the tree slipped from its anchorage. An excellent job!

Picking up his prospecting outfit, Pete prepared to leave, but the exit from the gully was made guardedly. From cover, he looked up and down the river banks and, satisfied that no one was around, he hastened along to the creek mouth and thence up into the stand of heavy spruce above. Here he hid his tools, and then, deliberately, selected the path leading to the Bradley house.

Up to this time, Pete's manner had continued to be gay and self-possessed—the holiday spirits of the early morning. But from the first glance at the

deserted Bradley home, everything was changed. And well might it! Even in these few days, the garden was over-run with weeds, for June is the month of growth and nothing short of frequent hoeing will hold the lamb's quarter and shepherd's purse in check. But it was the empty house itself, with its bare, curtainless, flowerless windows—the home of his blue-eyed goddess! that completed the transformation.

As he sat there, his eyes on the wicket gate where he had given her the nugget, first rage and then utter dejection shook his being. His shoulders sagged and even the physical body seemed to shrink. While in his heart crept *the awfulness*—the demon mania that numbed his brain and drew a black curtain before his drooping eyes. He had known what he would see here, and he had challenged his soul to face it—to fight out its battle with the scene of desolation. And it had failed! He rose to his feet, steadied himself, and strode mechanically out through the gate and down the south trail homeward.

Some miles down the trail Pete was overtaken by a farmer in a democrat, who pulled up his team to offer him a lift. To the man's question as to whether he was going to town, Pete did not reply, but he climbed up into the driver's seat and sank down with a sigh of weariness. Twice the kindly farmer spoke to him on the long trip without obtaining response, and he finally concluded that his passenger, evidently a foreigner, could not understand or speak English. The only alternative which occurred to him was that the man was stupidly drunk, and to this, Pete's attitude gave credence, for his head hung forward, chin on breast, and his eye-lids appeared half closed.

Driving into the livery stable, the farmer threw the reins to Luke Fenwick and, getting out, gave instructions about feeding his team. When he turned again, his silent passenger had disappeared.

At 6.45 that evening, Long was among those who loafed at the depot awaiting the arrival of the west-bound train. Two days had passed since the Fancy Dress Dance, and he was finding his resolution to blot Peggy from his mind no easy matter. Her conduct struck him as inexcusable—unfair! It was her privilege, any girl's privilege, to turn a man down if she did not want him. On the other hand, surely, to propose marriage was the greatest compliment any man could pay a woman and, damn it! she would not even listen to him! That rankled. She might as well have slapped his face also, by way of rubbing it in. The only thing was to *forget* her, for she had apparently only come into his life to hurt him and to disturb his peace of mind. So ran his thoughts.

Long's presence on the platform was the direct outcome of this laudable determination. He was restless to the point where to keep going was the only course; to exercise, to mix with other people—any alternative to being home, alone. The extent of his promenade here was from the western limit of the platform, where it sloped down to the road-bed level, and back to where it did likewise at its eastern limit. And it was at the latter point, after several such strolls, that he noticed Pete. He addressed a "good evening" to the little man as a matter of course. But Pete's sunny smile was not forthcoming; in fact, he appeared preoccupied and unconscious of another's presence.

How could Long know the present condition of mind of this singer of love-ballads—the usually cheerful little Galician? Only one man in Gopherburg would have recognized the symptoms of one of Pete's occasional attacks, and he alone knew the real nature of his mental disorder—the town scavenger.

Since leaving the abandoned Bradley home, Pete's mania had been rising to the climax. The black curtain, with its darting red crescents, had now closed completely before his eyes. His body was weary—unutterably weary. His soul asked only oblivion.

With a roar, the westbound passenger train rounded the curve and, with bell clanging warningly, came racing toward them. And "Dago" Pete reeled forward and hurled himself in front.

The engine struck the body and it was swept clear across the track by the cow-catcher.

Long stood horrified. It instantly occurred to him, however, that to get to Pete the quickest, he must wait for the train to stop and then rush through the nearest vestibule. And this he did.

He raised the little man's body in his arms, calling his name. Pete knew him, and smiled—his mania gone, and the mental kink straightened out for all time. "Quick, listen, Mr. Long," he pleaded. "You know Bradley place? Yes! You know creek? Yes! East two hundred paces—li'l gully. Spruce tree. You go—*diamonds!*"

"Oh! yes, Pete," Long comforted.

"For Bill and—Lucy. You understand?"

Men were approaching, running fast.

"You go, Mr. Long? Say yes!"

"Yes, Pete, yes. Oh, Pete!" for the eyes were dimming.

"Life's too weariness!" sighed "Dago" Pete, and his soul was at peace at last.

* * * * *

The whole thing was only a matter of seconds. Man takes so long a time to live—and so short a time to die.

Corporal Smith was the first to arrive, closely followed by others who had seen it. "How?" he asked.

"He's gone!" Long replied, and laid the body down.

Smith held out his arms to warn back the curious. He looked around for means of disposing of the body and an empty box-car, "spotted" at the grain elevator three tracks across, caught his eye. "Help me, Mr. Long, please," he ordered, and nodded in the direction of the car.

They carried over the body and deposited it on the floor. Then the policeman climbed in and closed-to the far door. He found an old grain sack in a corner of the car and laid this gently over the dead man's face. And, jumping down, he slid the near door into place.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PROS AND CONS.

THE TRAGEDY at the depot, while affording the townsfolk a subject for conversation, would not, in the ordinary way, have created any particular sensation, for, after all, one foreign section-hand more or less was neither here nor there.

This particular case, however, raised points of quite unusual interest and, as the hours passed, the debate became more and more general. Men quarrelled with their partners over it—wasting valuable time. Street gossips laid down the law to all and sundry who could be persuaded to stop and listen. And even the dear ladies expressed heated opinions, rich with idiomatic phrases, such as, "it's a shame", "disgusting, I call it", and "what's the Government for?". Briefly stated, here was the question before the house: The man was dead. The body was in a box car on the railway right-of-way. And, this being so, who was responsible for the expense of burial?

It was one of those storms in a tea-pot which spring up quite unexpectedly to ruffle the waters of placid every-day civic life. For when Corporal Smith telegraphed Police Headquarters at Prince Albert, briefly outlining the facts, he never dreamed that his innocent request for confirmation respecting burial would be denied. The advices he did receive, not

only repudiated responsibility on the part of the Royal North West Mounted Police, but stated emphatically that the death, occurring within the town limits, the cost of burial was up to the town. If this was the ruling, then there was only one thing for Corporal Smith to do, and that, to so inform the Mayor without delay.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed His Worship indignantly, "I never heard such rot in all my life!" Whereupon Corporal Smith waved the newly typewritten telegram before His Worship's eyes, shrugged his shoulders and left him storming.

So the mayor hastened to the office of Frankie Lewis, Town Clerk, and here the municipal viewpoint was again expressed with considerable vehemence. On the other hand, the Mayor and Clerk do not constitute the town council, and to dispose of the problem officially, it must necessarily be discussed and voted upon at a meeting duly called and held. An extraordinary session was consequently decided upon, the Mayor promising to "whip up" one half of the town fathers, if the Clerk would "rustle" the balance.

The meeting, called for noon, was attended not only by the council en masse, but by sundry others of the court-loafing busy-body fraternity. His Worship called for order and set out the facts of the case. He then asked for an expression of opinion from all councillors present.

To detail the particular views of the individuals, and their manner of expression, is unnecessary, since Frankie Lewis condensed the unanimous, but wordy, opinions into a few characteristic sentences. As Town Clerk, of course, his duty was to record the proceedings and to keep silent himself; but Mayors

and Councillors come and go, whilst Town Clerks become wise with the years in municipal matters. A sensible council is one recognizing the value of guidance from the one who knows the ropes.

"Your Worship and gentlemen," said the human robin, rising to his feet and bowing with his accustomed courtesy, "the burial of the deceased, with the funeral expenditure incidental thereto, is not the concern of the Town of Gopherburg. Our departed—shall I say—friend? as you all know, was a section hand and, as such, made his habitat in the section gang's bunk cars provided by the railway. And, since these are located on the spur ex (without) the precincts of our fair town, he cannot, nay, may not, be regarded as a townsman, or even a transient within our gates. This, being granted, and his rural domicile admitted, the onus of interment rests with the Local Improvement District Number 314, and pro tem, and pending adjustment, with the Royal North West Mounted Police." Frankie felt that, having put the thing logically and legally, a touch of sentiment would not be out of place. "Gentlemen," he continued, "I have spoken as Gopherburg's Auctioneer, Real Estate and Insur—em!—your pardon—as Gopherburg's Town Clerk. But, 'I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him', em!—what I mean to say, Gentlemen, is, that if our fair town cannot bury Pete as a matter of municipal principle, some little token of sympathy would be well and fitting. The word 'wreath' occurs to me." Frankie shook his head to dispose of unmanly tears and sat down.

It was then moved, seconded and carried: "That the Town of Gopherburg, not being liable for the funeral expenses of one Pete, a section hand of domi-

cile outside the municipal limits, does not assume such responsibility, but donates a wreath. And that the Royal North West Mounted Police, through its local representative, Corporal Smith, be notified accordingly."

So, on receiving such notification, the policeman again telegraphed his Superintendent, reporting the facts and requesting definite instructions; and received in reply a curt message to the effect that Prince Albert washed its hands of the matter, and that the incident was closed. It was at this stage in the affair that the debate, as already mentioned, became general.

Long, in the bank, had been posted hourly throughout the day, so, when Smith tapped on his office window at 4 o'clock, he opened the front door for him without a word, and led the way to his sanc-tum. "Well, how goes the battle?" he inquired.

"Oh! the thing's a deadlock, and I simply don't know what to do." He wiped the beads of perspira-tion from his forehead.

Long considered the matter thoughtfully. "It is annoying," he admitted, "but I suppose one side or the other will have to give way in the end."

"In the end? Man! don't you realize that it's ninety-eight in the shade?"

"I'm sorry, Tommy. And—it's still in the box car?"

"Yes! and the flies——" The policeman shud-dered.

"Then what the hell are we sitting here for!" Long demanded, and followed the question with another. "When should he be buried at the latest?"

"Tomorrow!"

"Slip across to Will Croft's, Tommy, and give instructions for the funeral. Tell him—if necessary—that we'll guarantee costs. And get back here *pronto*."

"But, Jimmy," his friend asked, relieved, but doubting, "how are we going to do it?"

"O! ye of little faith," Long quoted and, picking up a pen, he ruled parallel lines across a piece of paper.

* * * * *

So, for the second time inside three weeks, these two begged round the streets of Gopherburg. And the result was never in doubt.

As a matter of fact, they did receive one rebuke on this occasion. Seeing the town scavenger leaning against the sign-post of the KING EDWARD, they had attempted to slip by. "Hi!" he had checked them, "who's that for—Pete?"

"Yes," Long had replied.

"Then why pass me—who was his friend?" He put his hand into a pocket of his dirty overalls and turned it inside out. The contents, two crumpled dollar bills and silver, he gave without even looking at it.

Said Long: "The funeral will be tomorrow afternoon."

"Thank you," Fitzgerald had replied, simply.

The subscription list was soon filled comfortably; the very men who had at mid-day, as councillors, voted against the town burying Pete, now giving the more generously to clear their personal consciences.

"We've more than enough for the funeral, Jimmy," announced the policeman, hopefully. "It should run to a small stone."

"Yes, that would be fine. And now for the Padre!" Long reminded.

"I guess I'd better go to St. Antoine myself. The Nellie mare should get me back by 7 o'clock. I'll look you up at your house on my return."

"Good," Long agreed. "Supper will be waiting for you."

St. Antoine was a French farming settlement some miles out on a prettily wooded lake, and Father Bertrand, the priest for the district, made it his headquarters. So Corporal Smith saddled Nellie and telling her to "step lively", was shortly on his way. He addressed a further remark to her later, but the query remains unanswered. "If you can tell me, Nellie, why these blessed Frenchmen always settle on some to hell and gone lake, you know more than I do!"

At the hour appointed, Long was ready for him, and, true to the word of its wearer, the dust-begrimed red coat shortly after appeared in the doorway.

"All right!" said Long on seeing the face of the returned one, "it will keep until you've had some coffee and something to eat. Here, put this into you," and piled his plate with fried eggs and bacon.

"Now," said his host twenty minutes later, "we're both strong enough to stand it. What's the trouble —was he away from home?"

"No!" Tommy Smith replied, inhaling a lung-full of pipe smoke, and delaying his answer until it was blown out again. "I found him right off the bat. But he won't do it!"

"What? He won't bury Pete?"

"No. He asked me full particulars—and declined."

"But on what grounds?" Long asked, incredulously.

"Oh! He called it 'self-murder', and said it was contra to something or other of his church."

"Come to think of it," the other admitted, "I believe he's right."

"Then it's too damn bad you didn't remember at 5 o'clock!" said the policeman, ruefully.

Long laughed. "Oh! you're young, and you know Nellie needed the exercise."

"Stop it—or I'll murder you. What do we do next?"

"Why!—we get someone else, I suppose."

"We can't get Dobs. He's up the line."

"Then it will *have to be* Keith," Long agreed. "I don't suppose poor little Pete would mind anyway?"

"Not he! And it's *your* turn to try your luck at the manse."

"It's fifty-fifty, so far," Long dissented. "You went to St. Antoine and I cooked the supper."

"Then I'll toss you for it?"

Long nodded, and the policeman flipped a fifty-cent piece into the air.

"A head's called!" said Long.

Smith caught the coin in his palm and glanced at it. "Like my luck," he said, and reached for his Stetson.

Long, returning plates to the pantry shelves, heard the heavy police boots on the verandah boards. "All fixed this time?" he called cheerfully.

"All fixed—hell!" responded the angry policeman.

Long met him in the hall. "Why, what's the

matter now? I didn't think that he'd be fussy about a suicide."

"Suicide, me aunt! It's not that. But 'tis against his religious principles to bury a Roman Catholic'!"

Long whistled. "Oh! that's it. I see," he said thoughtfully.

"Oh! you see—do you?" Smith retorted. "Then I'm hanged if I do. Two men—supposed to be Christian clergymen—and won't bury poor little Pete. Why, he was unaccountable for his actions when a fit took him! And here these two pious prigs are presuming to judge him. 'Damned'! that's their verdict, before his Maker's had a crack at the case at all. Christianity? Oh, Lord! what a *mess* they make of it!"

"Hold your horses a minute, Tommy, and cool down. After all, it's all in the way we're brought up; in fact, it's deeper than that—it's heredity. To you, a Mounted Policeman, or to me, a bank man, the stand taken by the Padre and Keith appears unreasonable, but, then, are *we* qualified exactly to judge *them*? Father Bertrand, I know from certain facts which have come before me to be a thoroughly good man; and Keith, a curler, and all round sport, is a pretty good sample. No! the thing's deeper than personality. The Catholic Church condemns suicide as a deadly sin and, to reduce it to the lowest possible proportions, denies the rights of the Church to offenders. That's the penalty—the known penalty of disobedience, and, like other penalties—hanging, for instance—it doubtless tends to achieve results. Now, take Keith's case. He's got nothing against Pete personally, I'll be bound, but his fight

with the Roman Catholic Church dates back to the Reformation and before it. That was some fight, Tommy, and just because *we* have lost interest, and are ready to forget it, can't we expect Keith to? I'll bet his people have been Presbyterian ministers for generations, and that the venom of the old scrap is still curdling their mothers' milk. Why, you can see it in Keith—the way he holds his feet, and everything!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" yelled Tommy Smith from the davenport. "Oh, Jimmy, don't make me laugh. And give me a drink, there's a dear chap. I guess I was a bit tired."

"It's what we both need, I fancy," Long replied soberly, and rose to get the tray.

"We're still shy one clergyman," Smith suggested, sipping his whisky.

"But we won't be after 11.45 tomorrow morning. I'm going down to the depot to send a wire to Dobs right now. You stay here."

This is the message that Long coaxed Archie Stevens to send over the wire a few minutes later:—

"Rev. Dobson,
Brierly Station.

Please return noon train tomorrow for
Pete's funeral. B and K decline to
officiate.

LONG."

As a matter of fact, it was eight o'clock next morning when the Rev. Philimore Dobson showed up. The policeman, as arranged over-night, had gone over to Long's house for breakfast to discuss details during the meal, and here their friend broke in upon them.

"For goodness sake, Dobs, how did you get here?—catch a freight?" Long asked.

"No," the clergyman replied, shaking dust from his black coat and hat, "I walked."

"Walked?" repeated Tommy Smith in amazement.

Dobson laughed. "Sure! started at 5 o'clock." He looked at his watch. "Good time, too—over the ties!"

"Had any breakfast?" Long inquired.

"Why, no—come to think of it!"

"Oh! sit down, man," Long ordered, "and eat first."

"Now, tell us," his host questioned some minutes later, "why didn't you wait for the train?"

Dobson looked up, his black eyes twinkling like a guinea-pig's. "I daren't risk it."

"Risk what?"

"Hush!—that one of them would relent."

They left for the cemetery at 2 o'clock. The three of them, with a driver, occupied the two front seats of Will Croft's second best hearse—an elongated democrat, painted black.

There were two wreaths. For, immediately after breakfast, Dobson had appealed to Mrs. Bridget, and she, in turn, had ransacked neighbour's gardens for white flowers. The Town's contribution had been telegraphed for to Prince Albert, and arrived on the noon train. These two tributes to poor little Pete at least *looked* much alike!

Smith had been delegated to find Fitzgerald, and to invite him to come along. He whispered the result of his mission to Long just before they started. "It's no go, Jimmy. Too bad!—but he's blind drunk."

At the newly digged grave, the Rev. Dobson read the words of comfort and farewell:—

"I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

It is a clergyman's duty to conduct the services of the church, even burial services, with Christian fortitude; but the two mourners struggled bravely to hold back the welling tears, and without any great success.

There! it was over:—

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the *love* of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. Amen."

They turned from the grave and walked slowly back to the gate.

"All right," Long instructed the driver. "Don't wait for us. We'll take our time."

And it was on the homeward journey that Dobson developed his bad spell—qualms of conscience—what you will. They were walking silently along the dusty trail, the clergyman in the centre, and his words carried the note of anguish. "You don't think, by any chance, that I've done wrong?"

It was Long who replied. "Wrong? How do you mean—the Padre's reason?"

"No, no, no! Pete was irresponsible. *That's* between my Master and myself. But——"

"But what, then?"

"He was a Catholic."

"Of course. We know that!" Long put in.

"And I've not only given him the English Church burial service——"

"His own Priest wouldn't give him any!" Smith snapped.

"But," continued the Rev. Dobson, "I've buried him in the Anglican plot."

The others closed in upon him and took the black-sleeved arms within their own.

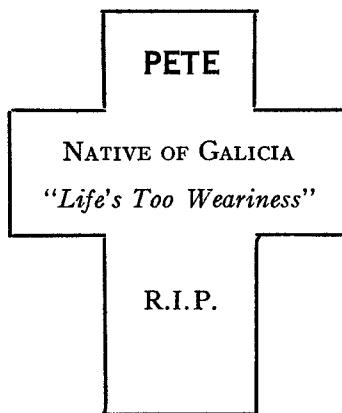
Said Long, gently: "Dobs, for what you have done to-day, you need have no regrets."

"You don't think then, that I've stolen a march on him—after he is dead?"

"No!" Long replied emphatically, "I don't think anything so absurd!"

"Then," said the Rev. Philimore Dobson, cheering up, "I'm going to ask a favour. Let me attend to the stone, and I'll try and square myself."

It was, of course, some months later before the little stone was erected. But anyone interested can find it in the Anglican plot of the little cemetery at Gopherburg, Sask., where it has stood these many years:—



CHAPTER XXIV.

A TROUBLED CONSCIENCE

GOING to bed is pretty much of a habit, and when Long had turned in at 11 o'clock, the thought of being unable to sleep had never occurred to him. Yet sleep he could not, and, all too late, he regretted those two strong cups of tea with his supper. It was his own pet theory that 99 per cent of the so-called "insomnia" was due to tea or coffee, either taken habitually to excess or, in specific cases, too near to bed time. And, here he was, the victim of his own foolishness, rolling around and thinking! thinking! thinking!

Brains are given to human beings to contribute to the enjoyment of life, but when they take the bit between their teeth and function contrary to their owner's wishes, they are just a plain nuisance. What is more, they cannot be fooled or lulled into quietude—sheep jumping over a style! bah! Long had tried it several times in the past three hours: white sheep, black sheep and mixed. His brain was ready to play the game with him indefinitely—rather enjoyed it, in fact! but it also jumped to other topics with annoying persistency. Over and over again the tea-stimulated brain conjured up the one train of thought most particularly to be avoided—Peggy! And again, before he knew it, the whole wretched business would be reviewed in logical sequence.

Then Pete would be offered as an alternative, and Long would live again the tragedy at the depot, the shock to himself, and the little man's dying dream. "Poor Pete!" his thoughts would run, "speaking of diamonds on the Saskatchewan river as earnestly as if the thing were possible. Delirium! It was a common form—belief in the acquisition of wealth! And if Marsden had *not* cut him out, and it was *not* her money, then the thing was unexplainable! For that she had rebuffed him, there wasn't a doubt—Oh! damn that tea—anyway! Sheep, it was sheep he must think about—sheep jumping—ah! that was better. There they went, one, two, three, over the bank of the Saskatchewan river, clearing the spruce tree in the gully Pete had told him about. That was where he was to look for the diamonds—the dying man's bequest to Bill Bradley and Lucy!—poor old Bill! By the way, he had promised Pete something! Yes! about going to the gully! Oh! the thing was ridiculous! But, supposing it were not! Supposing something *was* there?—what sort of a prize liar was he? Come to think of it, Pete had been very insistent—had made him say 'yes, he would go' twice! That was three days ago, and he had done nothing. And Pete was dead. And Bradley was in jail. And Peggy—" He could stand the vicious circle no longer. With a sweep of his hand he threw the clothes off him and leapt out of bed.

Lighting the lamp, he pulled on trousers and jacket. Next he lighted his pipe and considered the Pete matter over again.

It was absurd, of course, he realized that, but just the same he must go if only for the sake of disposing of it once and for all. The routine of banking had

made him a slave to duty until life seemed to consist in serving that unsparing mistress—duty to the bank! the sacred duty to his mother! public service at the Board of Trade or Agricultural Society! the Church! and so on. Now it was Pete's dying wishes, and next it would be a stray dog! He decided that it might as well be next day as any other, no, *to-day*, for the little clock on the dressing table read 2.15. If he could get it all arranged, he felt he might be able to sleep. Who should he take with him? Dobs. He went downstairs and hastened over to the rectory.

"I hate to disturb you, Dobs," he said, after knocking on the open bed-room door, "but it's got my goat."

"Come in, Jimmy," the cheerful one responded, "and light the lamp. Now, who's got it?"

"That's one of the complications—it's not my secret. What I want you to do is to leave with me at 10 o'clock in my car. Will you come?"

"That's easy, Jimmy. I'll come. How long away?"

"Probably all day, and I'll look after the grub. Thanks, Dobs." And Long returned home to enjoy the blessing of sleep.

They started shortly after the hour named, and Long did not spare the gas. Their conversation covered every imaginable topic except the purpose of the rush trip north; and, until Long turned the car into the gateway at Bradley's homestead and shut off the engine in the yard, his companion had not even known their destination.

"There," said Long, stepping down, "the shack hides the car from the road. I'd prefer that we

should not be seen, but if anyone does come, say that you expect me back shortly."

"What do I do," Dobson inquired, smiling, "lie doggo?"

"That's the idea exactly. Why not have a nap to make up for the sleep I robbed you of last night? Well, I'll beat it. I should be back inside an hour."

"Good fishing, Jimmy! I'll await lunch for you."

Pete's brief instructions had at least been definite, and Long hurried through the spruce to the creek mouth. Here—a good fishing place—he observed caution, for whether his mission would prove a wild goose chase or not, he did not wish to be seen. Satisfied that there was no one about, he strode east along the river one hundred paces, and fifty, and thirty-five. "Yes, this would be the gully," he stopped to think for a moment, "and Pete's shorter legs would explain that. Now for a spruce tree. By jiminy, yes! over at the far side. Pete's land-marks were correct, anyway. But—diamonds? Poor Pete!"

Again, before turning into the gully, he looked up and down the river and, satisfied that he had everything to himself, he raced over to the tree. Pete had indeed done his work well. There was nothing to give an idea that the spruce leaning drunkenly against the bank in its own debris was anything but the victim of nature, and Long, hoping against hope shook his head. He was not the type, however, to lie down on a job until the last dog was hanged. He was there to investigate that spruce tree and he was going to do it. To this end, he stepped onto the little mound of dirt and seized the tree trunk in his hands. "'Diamonds' called!" he said aloud, and toppled it over on its side.

"Merciful heavens!" What was that? "Coal!—a five-foot seam of coal!"

He examined it quickly. It was domestic, and roofed with six inches of sand-stone. As he raised the spruce tree back into place and removed all trace of his footprints, his mind was busy visualizing the value of Pete's find. Coal up to the present had been almost prohibitive in price in that section, due to the long freight haul from the west or south; so much so that even furnaces in residences and business blocks burned cord wood. Looking at things in the least favourable light—assuming the coal to be of second quality and the field limited—the spruce tree's secret was a small fortune to the Bradleys! He returned with all speed to the waiting Dobson.

"Jimmy, I'm as hungry as a pike!" the cheerful one greeted him. "If you say I mayn't have lunch, I shall hate you."

Long laughed. "Yes, let's eat; and I can tell you what we have to do next during the process."

"It's like this, Dobs," he resumed, after the first pangs of hunger had been satisfied and bottled beer had quenched their thirst. "It's of the utmost importance that Mrs. Bradley and Lucy be got back into that shack immediately. They're at her sister's place—you know where that is, don't you?"

"Yes, south from here a quarter of a mile to the cross-roads and ten miles east. Horrid trail."

"Not too good, I admit, old chap, but I want you to take 'Nick' and bring them home. You don't mind, do you?"

"This is your party, Jimmy. Is it permitted to ask what happens to you?"

Long smiled. "Yes. I've got to make town in time to send a telegram. And I can do it if I start now, even if I have to walk all the way."

"What do I tell Mrs. Bradley—she might refuse to budge."

"Tell her, Dobs, that I say it means everything to Bill—or better still, tell Lucy. I should judge her to be the stronger character. You'll see that they bring supplies to keep them going for three or four days, and get a list of what will be required for the future. Promise them, for me, that they need not worry on that score. For the rest, use your own judgment."

Dobson ran the car to the east and west trail and, as he had taken the wheel a number of times previously, he experienced no difficulty. Here Long got out. "You'll get them—won't you?" he pleaded.

"Sure! I will, Jimmy."

"And, Dobs, you understand, don't you? This matter's important. I wouldn't hesitate to tell you, but if I did—you'd know, and—" he smiled "—you couldn't very well then tell Mrs. Bradley and Lucy that you didn't."

"You're absolutely right. The knowledge would only embarrass me, and curiosity is the least of my faults. Sorry we must part like this! Cheer-i-o." He gave "Nick" the gas and headed east down the perilous trail.

As for Long, while the walk ahead of him was scarcely inviting on a warm afternoon in June, he had done greater distances time and again for pleasure and it held no real terrors for him. Moreover, he was enjoying the exhilaration of success. He always felt that way on attaining his objective in

anything—and his interests in life were many. This thing meant so much, not only to the Bradleys, but to the district at large. To protect the former, he must consider the procedure to be taken carefully, for it would not do to slip up there. He had glanced at his watch on leaving Dobson and, five miles south he pulled it out again. "One hour and thirteen minutes. Some stepping!" he murmured, and went into it again, heel and toe.

A mile or two further on, a neat place on the west side of the trail caught his eye. The house was not pretentious, but the huge barn, mostly hidden in the white poplar bluff, was the truer index to the owner's position. Driving past in the car, he had failed to see it in the past. "Well, he would go in now. It might provide a ride to town."

The front door to most farm houses on the prairie is used only on Sunday afternoon, when "company" arrives; and even a bank manager making friendly calls on week days announces his presence at the kitchen entrance. Long's experienced eye, however, noted two things; the blinds of the front parlour were up and the pathway to the front door was worn as by every-day use. He stepped up onto the verandah and knocked on the wood-work of the fly-screen door. Then he heard steps approaching and himself pulled open the screen.

It would be difficult to state whether Long or the girl who came to the door was the more surprised. She had been reading, for the book, closed on her fingers to mark the place, was still in her left hand. She had expected a neighbour's child to borrow something, or a vendor of household remedies, or some other casual and inconsequential inquirer. Coming

face to face with Long, a faint flush rose to her cheeks and unconsciously the hand holding the book was raised to her breast.

Perhaps the astonishment in Long's eyes was responsible for the girl's touch of shyness, but he might be excused in all fairness. She was tall and, even in the simple home-made house dress, her figure was graceful and striking. But it was the face crowned with wavy, golden-brown hair that instantly appealed to Long's sense of beauty. The nose was straight. The forehead intellectual. The chin well modelled. The mouth full, red and clearly defined. As for the eyes beneath the soft brown brows, they showed character of quite unusual order. He raised his hat and smiled, striving to put both of them at their ease. "I'm Mr. Long, the bank manager from Gopherburg," he explained.

"Oh! yes. I have heard of you. Will you not come in?"

The voice was musical and the words were spoken correctly and without a trace of foreign accent, but Long had the goddess placed now. It is only those who, in their every-day life, use two languages who enunciate their English with such meticulous care. And she was clutching *Ibsen* to her breast.

"Thanks, but—would you mind telling me whose place this is?"

The girl bit her lip and he could read her amusement. "It's Erick Charlson's," she informed him.

"Is Mr. Charlson at home?"

"Yes, he is doing chores around the barn."

"Then I think I'll go and find him. Thank you very much." Long let the screen door close to quietly between them.

Erick Charlson! The name sounded familiar, but Long could not remember him until he located the man himself at the barn. Then he knew him instantly. Charlson, a tall black-bearded Norwegian of magnificent proportions and handsome features, had applied for a loan in the spring for the purpose of paying off a hired man. That he should wish to do this just at the commencement of the busy season, after keeping him all winter, had struck Long as strange, and he had commented: "No good, I suppose," to receive Charlson's unexpected response, "Yes, he's a good worker; but I fired him last night for speaking cross to the horses." Long recollect ed that he had smiled, and that Charlson had explained. "I won't have my horses spoken cross to. They work hard and when they are through their day's work they should be treated kindly. But Ben's impatient to get to his supper and if they're not quick enough for him he speaks cross. I warned him once before."

To this man Long now extended his hand. "Good afternoon, Mr. Charlson."

"Why, Mr. Long, what are you doing up here?"

"Oh, I left my car six or seven miles north with a friend and I walked this far homeward."

There was humour in the farmer's eyes. "So you want me to drive you in?"

Long laughed. "Well, it would help considerably," he admitted.

"All right, Mr. Long, my little driving team's fresh. But you haven't seen my barn. Come and look it over—I'm sort of proud of it."

So Long must needs go the rounds and inspect the hay loft with its chutes for feeding fodder into

the mangers below; the modern stanchions for holding the milk cows; and the cement floor with its hygienic principles of drainage. There are two schools of thought in dairy barn construction; one which contends that it is simpler to face the patient beasts inward with their rumps to the light, and the other which holds that light achieves no good purpose at the rump end. Long's host was a disciple of the latter, and he was ready to expatiate logically and lengthily in its support.

"Mr. Charlson, I have to send a rather important telegram when I get back to town," Long finally dared to mention, and Charlson, with a sigh, led the way back into the light of day.

But the prairie farmer will not be hurried. His time is his own, and to rush things is not his idea of hospitality. Charlson was willing to postpone his chores in order to take his guest to town, but the formalities must be observed! Said he: "And now we must have a cup of coffee before we go. Besides, I would wish you to meet my daughter." It was Long's turn to bite his lip!

"Ingeborg," Charlson introduced him, "this is Mr. Long, the bank manager at Gopherburg."

There was merriment in her eyes. "I met him, father, half an hour ago when he called to inquire—if you were at home."

It would not have mattered very much if she had said instead, "to inquire who lives here"; but her version was the kinder, and Long smiled his appreciation.

They were left together for a few minutes while Charlson brushed up and the visitor learned that Ingeborg was the teacher at the little district school

nearby. She had, it appeared, only dismissed her youngsters and returned home a few minutes before his arrival.

"By the way, Miss Charlson," Long put the question, watching her closely, "do you like Ibsen?"

"Yes, I—" She stopped for a second and Long noted the fine brows contract with momentary perplexity. "I think he is wonderful. And, Mr. Long—I was carrying the book!" Her laughing lips disclosed white even teeth.

Long threw up a hand, conceding her the point. His object had been to test the quickness of her mind, but his next casual remark would show its quality. "I suppose, as a Norwegian, his plays, with their home setting, would have a *special appeal* to you?"

Ingeborg considered this before answering. "No," she said, "I do not think that is it. To me the *wonderful thing* about Ibsen is—" she was selecting her words carefully "—that the human traits with which he dealt are of all peoples, and of all time."

Then her father returned and, shortly after, with the coffee and cakes, the mother—at least Long concluded such would be the relationship, but, as she either could not or would not speak English, to shake her hand was as far as he got. It would be for her benefit that Norwegian would be spoken in the home circle—the old story of the women clinging obstinately to their mother tongue.

Ingeborg wished him good-bye where they had first met, with Long again holding open the screen door. "Do you get all the books you can do with, Miss Charlson? Because I have a trunk load at home and, if you would let me, I should be glad to leave parcels for you as I go past."

"Oh, that would be nice of you," and she gave him her hand.

On the homeward journey behind Erick Charlson's light driving team, Long's thoughts were centered on Ingeborg. "If it were only a case of physical beauty," he ruminated, "her lot, even supposing she married a neighbour's son, would probably be well enough. In their domestic life on a farm, it was reasonable to suppose that both would be content. But—rare as such instances must be—the girl had intellectuality, and, in all the finer characteristics, soared above the soil of her birth. With some experience in the world without, she could hold her own anywhere—would be a fitting mate for any man. Then how on earth would she be able to reconcile her probable destiny with her just dues? Yes, or suffer the inevitable tedium? Imagine her life with a man whose taste in literature was satisfied with a Sunday supplement ten days old, and whose idea of a social evening was to sit in his socks chewing Copenhagen snuff. What chance had she in her present surroundings to meet the right man? In the nature of things, she seemed almost bound to draw a blank. Why, the scoundrel might drink; might beat her! The thought was monstrous!"

His indignation woke him up—broke in upon his train of thought. "Here he was at it again; harrowing himself over other peoples' troubles, real or imaginary. A moment ago he would have been prepared to apply for long leave in order to hunt up a worth-while mate for this girl—to reach out for him into the unknown. And Ingeborg? Why, as likely as not, she would not have thanked him for his pains. What a blithering fool he was!"

And, once back in Gopherburg, Long hurried over to the bank and prepared a code telegram to the Prince Albert branch. They were instructed to pay all arrears on Bradley's pre-emption. To notify the Chief Inspector of Homesteads that Mrs. Bradley was in residence. And to file coal claims in Bradley's name for the maximum permitted centering on "discovery". They were to do these things without delay, employing a solicitor if considered advisable and advise progress by wire. All costs were to be at debit of Gopherburg branch.

CHAPTER XXV.

LOVE AT A DISCOUNT

LATE that evening, Dobson reported back and Long was relieved to learn that Mrs. Bradley and Lucy were reinstalled on the homestead.

The mission, Long learned, had been by no means easy, for the trail for a car had proved even worse than anticipated. Treacherous "pot holes" had taxed the driver's skill to the utmost and two or three broken culverts had promised almost certain disaster. To farmers in those days, neither "pot holes" nor broken culverts appeared of serious consequence, since a team of horses, properly handled, will pull through the one and over or around the other. A few years later, when farmers themselves became car owners, their views respecting roads changed radically, and things took a turn for the better.

Then Mrs. Bradley had questioned the wisdom of going back to the old home since they had moved to her sister's place at Bill's wishes. Dobson, however, had discussed the matter quietly with Lucy and had explained that, while he did not know himself his friend's reasons, it must be of the utmost importance. So Lucy thought the problem out for herself; why should Mr. Long ask them to do a thing like that unless it meant a lot to them? Why should he give his own time without good purpose? No! if they

declined to help themselves, it would be wrong—just stupid. "Come, Mary," she urged, "let's get ready as quickly as we can." And when Mrs. Bradley had demurred. "Could we look Bill in the face again, if we won't at least try and help him now?"

"So I got them home at last, Jimmy, with 'Nick' loaded to the gunwale. I daren't risk one broken culvert, so we bridged it with two of the rotten planks and Lucy stood out in front and directed how to steer. She's a brick, that girl."

"I think so," Long agreed. "All of that."

"Then, in a 'pot hole', we got stuck and I stalled the engine—had to climb out to crank in a foot of mud, with a bunch of wild ducks looking on and saying *quack, quack, quack.*"

There was laughter in Long's eyes. "Dobs, you'll remember this day for the rest of your natural life. It's not the normal ones, but the extraordinary that are worth living."

"In that case, I should have no quarrel with this. Look at my boots, Jimmy!"

"Our day's work is worth more than that. I hope to have a reply to my wire tomorrow morning, when I shall know for sure."

* * * * *

It was Long's practice, when a situation arose requiring a definite course of action, to drive at the most important points first. "Cinch your objective!" was the way he put it, "and the details will look after themselves."

The text matter of the telegram that he had despatched the previous evening covered the main issues to give the Bradleys the greatest benefit from the coal

find; and he had decided upon these in his rapid walk between leaving Dobson and calling at Erick Charlson's. His aim was to secure ownership not only of the coal rights, but the surface; and Bradley, he knew lacked but a few days of his three months' residence for that year to prove up on his homestead. The homesteader's determination to abandon both this and his pre-emption must, therefore, not be permitted; hence the rush to get the family back in residence and the wired instructions to protect both quarter sections.

On this, the following morning, however, he was torn between anxiety that his wishes were being followed to the letter at Prince Albert and some slight perplexity on the subject of "the details which (theoretically) should look after themselves". Re-reading the copy of his code telegram for the sixth time, he realized that, while explicit, he had been quite unrestrictive in the expenditure of funds and smiled grimly. "The principle's correct, anyway!" he muttered to himself.

It was not until after lunch that the expected message was delivered and, as he de-coded, he could feel his heart hammering. But it was brief to the point of humour.

"Both parcels protected. Coal secured. Costs
\$575."

With the first five words of the translation before him, Long could have let out a whoop of joy, but the last two checked the impulse, and he scratched his head instead. Next morning, on the noon train, he would receive from Prince Albert branch, their debit for \$575. In the interim, he must find means of meeting it!

"Let him think!" As a bank transaction, it must not be considered. Bradley—innocent as he felt him to be—was in jail and, apart from the undesirable features, was not available to do business, even to signing a note. He must, then, turn to others who would put up \$600; and, as he checked them off—and their number was quite limited—the outlook appeared blacker and blacker. Thurston? Not to be thought of! He would put up the money readily enough—there wasn't a doubt of that. But at what price? No, no, no—not even as a last resort. "Cap" Marsden? Here, again, the same objection existed, but in a lesser degree. "Cap" was a good sport, and generous when appealed to. But, even so, could he be trusted to view the matter as he would a church need, or a subscription list for charity? "Cap", behind his nonsense, was a keen business man—a money maker. He would demand particulars decidedly; and, supposing he took the stand that staking a valuable coal claim was not a case for altruism, but a matter of business? There was the rub! And so the argument went, until the small stock was exhausted. There was a fly in the honey pot of all of them. "Perhaps," Long concluded thoughtfully, "that's how they made it!"

Of generous souls who would take his word for the merits of the case and assist to the extent at their command, he could enumerate quite a few; but the *extent* in the individual cases was so small that it would mean perhaps twenty or thirty names and these scattered around the district. "No, this could not very well be handled in that way. As for Tommy Smith and Dobs!" He smiled, which was equivalent to saying, "broke, as usual!"

Long had been striding backwards and forwards across his office, worrying at the problem and this "detail" of finding the wretched \$600 required, appeared as unsolvable as ever. Now, at the window, he raised his eyes unconsciously and glanced across the street, as he had done for the last half hour. "Ah!" He had not thought of her.

His mind snapped back into action. He sprang to the chair at his desk and wrote hastily. "Here, Mr. Newlands," he called, "Miss Bolton has just gone into the Post Office. I want to see her on business. Please slip across and give her this note." And, his messenger gone, he braced himself for the task of begging from one who had trampled on him—scorning even to listen! "Oh! what did he care? Peggy? Tut, the girl was nothing to him now. But Bill Bradley, and his wife and baby, and Lucy—these were worthy of his best." He laughed. "Then let the scourge descend as a penance for my sins!"

Long met her at his door. "Good afternoon, Miss Bolton. Please sit down. But I won't detain you more than a few minutes."

"You said in your note, Mr. Long, that you wished to see me on business?" Peggy smiled. "Nothing wrong with my letter of credit, I hope?"

"Oh, dear, no, but the thing's a little difficult to explain."

The girl raised her eyebrows encouragingly.

"It's like this, Miss Bolton. I am trying to help some very poor people here in a matter that will mean, I feel sure, a great deal to them. The affair, however, should be kept quiet for the present, and I am not at liberty to divulge its nature, or the name of the family."

"Then how could I help?"

"A cash payment of \$575 is needed immediately."

"But, surely the bank——?"

"No, Miss Bolton, it is not a banking proposition."

"Why do you appeal to me?" She glanced at him quickly. "Oh, yes, of course—you would know."

"Yes." (O, let the scourge fall!) "As you say, of course I know the amount at your disposal. And I ask you particularly—you are entitled to that information, I think—because I am afraid that others might stipulate sharing in the spoils."

"I think I understand. You would rather——"

"Yes, that's it! I would rather ask you to trust me."

Peggy's eyes were thoughtful.

"Oh! there's no risk, Miss Bolton, because whatever happens to my friends, I shall see that you are repaid. Give me, say, three months' grace, and your money will be returned with bank interest."

"You say it is to help the poor. In that case, I want no interest."

"But that's not the way business is done, Miss Bolton. I will give you my note. Then, whatever befalls, everything is in order."

"You, of course, know best," Peggy smiled. "Let's compromise—if you must give a note. You keep it for me. Will a cheque on my eastern bankers do?"

"Quite well. And I thank you very much."

"Oh! To whom do I make it payable?"

"To—James Long, Miss Bolton."

A minute or two later, Peggy handed him the cheque and looked him bravely in the eyes. "Usually my solicitors look after my business affairs, but I feel

sure that you would not take any advantage of my ignorance. I hope your friends will benefit by my assistance. Some day—perhaps—you will be able to tell me all about it."

"Some day—when I may—I shall make a point of doing so."

"Then, good afternoon, Mr. Long."

"And you will say nothing—to *anyone*?"

"I promise you that."

"Then, again my thanks."

Long sat back in his chair, staring vacantly at the cheque on the desk before him. He had attained his objective—had solved the knotty "detail" of finance, but, if his appearance at that moment signified anything, he was far indeed from a state of jubilation. There was nothing in the transaction of which he need be ashamed. He had no misgivings on that score. Whether he was living or dead three months hence, the girl would get her money and with higher interest than any of her eastern investments would yield, was a good bet. But that he should have been driven to the point of begging from her of all people in the world, hurt grievously.

And from considering the side issue—this recent one of raising \$575, his thoughts reverted to the main one—the Bradleys. Yes, a thousand times, yes! The opportunity had been put in his hands to save them—to raise them from ignominy and wretchedness to decent human comforts and happiness. If he had shirked the task, or had weighed his personal feelings against his duty to them, he were a coward, a cur. Why, Good Lord! if things went well, he might shortly have Bradley money to burn. Then for a good lawyer, and it might be possible to have Bill's

case re-opened! Handled skillfully, he felt sure, the result would be different. That had been the trouble. Bill had paid the penalty of a poor man's law!

That made commiseration for himself a very petty thing. Boiled down, it all amounted to this: "He had been idiot enough to love the girl and she had snubbed him for his pains. Now, he had swallowed his pride and begged a favour of her. What did it matter? What the hell difference would it make a hundred years hence? If he had the backbone of a jelly-fish, he would see the joke and laugh his fool head off. He had offered her his love—and she had given him a cheque for \$575. Yes, he had sold out! His love affair was now a matter of dollars and cents, payable three months after date. And I think," he said, his lips narrowing to a hard line, "*that ghost is laid at last!*"

CHAPTER XXV

ARTISTS AT WORK

JAMES ROLSTON, the bank junior clerk, was not sleeping, though the hour was long past when sleep should have been his portion. Strange as it may appear, while he was rolling around in what might well have been mistaken for insomnia, he was not even trying to "fall off". On the contrary, so far from counting sheep and execrating tea, he was struggling determinedly against the soporific attributes of youth. From time to time he flicked on a small pocket flash-light, and glanced at his watch, only to learn with disgust that it was 12.15, 12.40, 1.05, etc., as the hands indicated the progress of interminable time.

His lips were parched, in spite of wetting them frequently with the tip of his tongue, and once dryness in his throat resulted in a spasm of terrifying coughing. To muffle this, he stuck his head under the clothes and held his breath until air appeared to be the logical (if not the only) alternative to strangulation. But his door, as he well knew, was half open, and semi-strangulation was preferable to disturbing "Parky" Newlands. 1.32, 1.40, 1.55— Rolston was consulting his watch more frequently now, and sweating profusely — 2 o'clock, 2.03, 2.05!

He moved the bed clothes quietly back and swung his legs over the side. Reaching to the rail at the foot, he located and grasped a black overcoat and a pair of socks, and these he pulled on. Using the small flash-light sparingly, he tip-toed over to the door, thence along the landing and down the stairs to the door into the bank. Here he observed the additional precaution of stooping low until safely across the public space and under cover of the counter. A momentary pause ensued to listen intently for noises of any kind; then he crawled over to the vault door. A few confident but silent turns of the knob and the combination was off. With a sigh of relief the junior clerk backed away and directed his cramped course to the back door some fifteen feet distant. Rising on his knees, he screwed back the bolt of the Yale latch with the right hand, and with the left pushed up the little jigger to hold it so.

Rolston's work was done! He retraced his steps to the bed so recently deserted. But before giving himself up to the luxury of sleep, he used the flash-light once more. The hands of his watch read 2.12.

Exactly three minutes later, that is, at 2.15, the back door of the bank was pushed inward and two masked men crawled through. Inasmuch as the office was lighted dimly by the guard lamp, they followed Rolston's example and worked their way below the level of the counter in their course to the vault. Here, the smaller of the two raised his hand to the lever handle and pushed it over noiselessly. They now both entered the vault and pulled the door to behind them.

Safe cracking is an exact science. To go at the job rough-shod may, or may not, meet with success,

but at best it is wasteful of time. The expert knows exactly what to do, and works quickly and quietly.

Of the busy pair on their knees before the Gopherburg bank safe, the big man evidently conceded master-craftsmanship to his companion. Practical knowledge he must himself have possessed, since he would anticipate the tool or material next needed, and have it sorted out and ready in his gloved hand. But the smaller worker was the artist. There was not a moment wasted, nor an unnecessary movement once he knelt to the task. And the time expended to when the safe door was packed with "the juice", and ready for blowing, was remarkably short.

The bank robbers now crawled out of the vault, closing the heavy steel door behind him. Still without so much as a spoken word passing between them, the next stage of their prearranged plan came into effect. The little man took cover under the counter, whilst the other sneaked round to behind the door leading upstairs. Their positions were scarcely taken when the explosion occurred. The frame building was jarred by the shock—a tremor as of a distant earthquake; but so nicely had the shot of "juice" been judged that the noise, muffled by the vault, would have been inaudible across the street.

The fourth occupant of the building, one "Parky" Newlands, stirred uneasily. He had, some four hours earlier, partaken of such ill-considered food as lobster salad, trifle and coffee in a little *tête-à-tête* evening with the young mistress of the Thurston home, and, while weariness had granted him sleep, its quality was tempered by the throes of digesting richness. "Parky", under the same circumstances, would have deemed even bread and cheese a feast. But lobster!

trifle! and served by Sybil's own fair hands, were ecstasy! She was positively petting him! He ate heedlessly. It is true that Sybil's behaviour throughout the evening had been teasing. She had "joshed him" quite a bit, including the banging of an empty candy bag right behind his ear as he sat on the davenport—a method of wooing less loving than of a dear one on the point of surrender.

Miss Sybil, to do her justice, was playing her cards handily. Long, from the moment her pretty eyes had first viewed him on the evening of his arrival in Gopherburg, had been her quarry. She wanted him, and admitted it to herself—for Sybil was no fool! But Long had proved difficult—indifferent to her charms to the point where very grave doubts as to ultimate success could no longer be denied; and to-day she would willingly have staked her all in that direction on the flip of a coin. Then wasn't she unwise to burn her bridges pro tem with "Parky" Newlands? He loved her—was absolutely crazy about her—and, while only an accountant as yet, he was really eligible in every way. As a wise virgin, she would be a goose to choke him off, when with even ordinary care she might keep him on the string at will—until she could make up her mind. That was the plan. If Long's attitude towards her should take a turn for the better, then "Parky", of course, went into the discard. But, at present, the betting looked all in favour of "Parky", hence this seizing of Peggy's absence on a flying trip to Prince Albert for a lobster salad *tête-à-tête*, and the tantalizing teasing to keep him at arm's length. The paper bag was part of the play.

But that particular practical joke once in an even-

ing is *enough* and the sleeper awakened himself with his own spoken reproof. "Oh, Sybil, cheese it!"

"Hello!" the lights were out! Why, he was in bed. He must have been dreaming. He must pull himself together. Surely there had been an explosion—he had felt the shake of it. And, by Jove, Sybil's bag had shaken nothing—unless it were his self respect."

Once satisfied that the thing required explaining, "Parky" Newlands never hesitated. Putting a dressing-gown over his pyjamas and stepping into bed-room slippers, he lighted the lamp. Then he opened his door and listened. But his ear could catch nothing unusual—just soundlessness. "Well, he would go down and inspect. That was his duty in sleeping over the bank."

Down the passage to the head of the stairs "Parky" proceeded, his knees trembling, and the hand holding the dinky little .32 revolver shaking so violently that he dared not trust his finger on the trigger. But he went on unhesitatingly, as his duty demanded, aware of his condition, aware that he had "blown up" with nervous excitement and "too frightened to be afraid". Down the stairs he went, his slippers slotting on each step, prepared, as he believed, for the worst, but hoping for the best.

Poor "Parky" never had a chance. The dastardly blow over the head was timed to a fraction of a second, and the body crumpled up and sank in a heap to the floor. The burly robber wasted not a moment. First he slipped the dinky revolver in his pocket and then seizing his victim by the arms, he dragged him along the floor to the vault, the door of which was simultaneously opened by the other man.

Once more they were at work inside, forcing the compartments of the safe, and stuffing fat bundles of bills into the small tool satchel with eager fingers. This done, they devoted a minute or so to the unconscious young man stretched on the vault floor. To ascertain the extent of his injury? To see whether he were alive or dead? Oh, dear no! Upon these points they cared nothing. But to guard against any possibility of his recovering and giving the alarm. The body was rolled over, that the dressing-gown cord might be jerked free, and, with this, the wrists were tied together behind the back. Now the mouth was forced open and a small coin sack pushed roughly in. And, with a parting kick, they left him. For had he not wasted valuable time?

The retreat of the bank robbers was well ordered. The combination of the vault door was thrown off, and when their exit had been made through the back door, the bank was, to all appearances, as when they had entered it. As an example of a skillfully planned and expertly executed bank robbery, it would have taken a lot of beating. These men were artists—even if their art was base. They were criminals worthy of the name—even if they deserved to be hanged.

Crossing the grass plot towards the double wooded gate opening into the lane, they came near to an accident. The big robber stepped on something which clattered back noisily with the ring of iron striking iron. It was the lid of the cess-pool not properly replaced by the bank janitor—an omission for which the careless fellow had been scored by Long on more than one occasion in the past. The men instantly dropped on their bellies and waited breathlessly. Would it be heard?

Yes! Into the night rose the note of warning! Old Vic, Passman's Airedale, who guarded the rear of his master's jewelry store, heard it, and was prepared to do his best. *Bark! bark! bark!* He had been chasing rabbits in his sleep, he remembered—and had nearly got the last one. *Bark! bark! bark!* "Oh, why didn't somebody come?—men were so funny!" *Bark! bark! bark!* "Or, worse still, why did they chain him up so he couldn't go and bite a piece out of somebody's leg?" *Bark! bark! bark!*

The bank robbers waited a moment or so, and then snaked their way over the lawn to the gate. Here they crouched under its friendly cover, cursing the faithful dog under their breath and waiting—waiting.

But Vic was not through yet. "He did not wish to be insistent, but he would give the town of Gopherburg a steady bark—a genuine Airedale bark—for ten minutes, and if that did not interest anyone, why, he would go back to his rabbits." At the end of his praiseworthy effort, he cocked his head on one side and listened. "No! he couldn't *hear* anything—but he was pretty sure that he could *smell 'em!* Well, one more little crack for luck: *bark! bark! bark!*" Old Vic crawled back into his kennel with the conviction that while the world was not as he would have it, he had at least done his best.

And, delaying a few precious moments more for safety's sake, the sneaking bank robbers pulled off their masks and crept silently down the lane.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MORE TROUBLE

THE following morning, Long arrived at the bank at 9 o'clock, as was his invariable custom. It was a lovely morning, and the early sun engendered cheerfulness. He was ready to face the day with the resolution, "be gone, dull care", and to meet all comers in a frame of mind both "merry and bright". This, it may be remarked, was not altogether the effect of the sun, but rather of his victory over himself. The Peggy episode—for weeks past a disturbing element to the peace of his soul—was now a dead issue. That trouble was past. And he *knew* it.

Usually, Newlands and Rolston were on deck before him and the mail would be on his desk. A glance into his room convinced him, however, that he was the first arrival, and he slipped across to the Post Office himself.

Opening the mail occupied his attention for a few minutes, and it was not until he had carried it out into the banking office, and noted the accusing clock, that he realized how late it was getting. 9.15 and still no staff! Rolston, who shared with him the custody of the combination on the vault door, would ordinarily open it when he arrived, and get out the books. In the absence of the junior, Long decided to throw off the combination himself, and was in the

act of doing this when Rolston made his appearance through the door from the staff apartments. Long, with two numbers passed, swung round to see which of the boys it was. "Ah! good morning, Rolston," he greeted the junior. "You're late this morning. Where's Mr. Newlands?"

"I haven't seen him, sir. I slept in."

"So I observe!" Long responded, good naturedly, and gave the combination the final turn.

As the door swung back, the trussed-up figure lying on the floor was right before his eyes. Newland's non-appearance was explained now, and with a significance he dared not even consider for the present. He was down beside the body instantly, and, to his intense relief, found life still in it. "Rolston," he called, "get the Doctor and Corporal Smith—and hurry!" Then, with his pocket knife, he cut the cord. To chafe the numbed arms and legs was his next move, and he was rewarded with signs of returning consciousness. Then Doctor Willoughby arrived on the scene.

"There," said the Doctor, a few minutes later, "I think he's safe to move now. We'd better get him upstairs to bed."

"Can you carry him, Doc? I can't very well leave that safe until I've investigated. You know his room—second door to the right."

"Sure! And I'll stay with him until you come up, so don't worry. The trouble's exhaustion and lack of air, plus a crack on the head—just about the same as a 'knockout' in a prize fight. He'll sleep it off." And Doctor Willoughby, once the pride of "Varsity scrum", picked up his patient and walked off with him.

Then Long looked in the direction of the safe and permitted his thoughts to dwell upon the story that lay behind the sagging door. His branch had been robbed—cleaned out! He knew only too well what would be found, and bitterness entered his soul. *That*, of all things, fate might have spared him.

"Cheer up, Jimmy," Tommy Smith whispered, when he saw his friend's face, "we'll do the best we can." And then, in a louder voice, that Rolston might hear. "Have you touched anything?"

"No. I thought it better to wait."

"Then let's have a look at it. These fellows probably worked with gloves and the chance of finger prints is pretty remote, but we may as well be careful." He pushed back the door, hanging by its lower hinge, with his own gloved hand, and Long mechanically examined the contents of the two compartments. It was just as anticipated: gutted of everything in the form of cash except a heavy bag of silver.

"How much, Jimmy?" the policeman asked.

"Approximately \$9,400. Hang around here will you? I want to see how Newlands is, and then I must telegraph my people."

"Right-o."

The condition of "Parky" Newlands, as Doctor Willoughby predicted, did not appear to be very serious. He had returned to consciousness just before Long went upstairs and had been excitedly demanding to see him.

"That's all right, Newlands." Long stooped over the pallid young man and patted him on the shoulder. "You did your damnedest—fine! And I'll report accordingly. What you need now is a good sleep."

"Did they get it, sir?"

Long laughed. "Oh! they scroffed some, but we've enough left to make change. I'll tell you the details later. What time did you go to bed?"

"About midnight when I turned in."

"And when did you go down?"

"I looked at my watch—2.40."

Doctor Willoughby cocked his eye in the direction of the door, and Long, smiling encouragingly at his accountant, beat a retreat.

Long's acting had been admirable, and "Parky", his mind relieved of responsibility and happy in the praise of his prowess, sighed contentedly, and returned to the land of sleep.

As for the comforter—his own heart heavy as lead—he lost no time in telegraphing his Head Office and Western Supervisor. It was not that the loss of such an amount was a very serious matter to his bank, or that he would be scored in any way—intelligent bank executives do not score or doubt their tried men. No, the whip-lash around his shoulders in those black hours was his own—the merciless one of self-condemnation.

In fiction, thieves are credited with being able to open safes by occult powers of hearing and touch—sand-papered finger tips and all that sort of thing—which, in fiction, is well enough. Long knew that an expert, by trying some thousands of combinations, could open up in time, *unlimited* time. But that was just it! These thieves did not have unlimited time at their disposal. It must have been a rush job—an inside one. The thing was obvious.

"To what detestable conclusions this led! If he were himself innocent, then he who shared with him the knowledge of the combination numbers was the

only alternative—Rolston! He had taken on the roughneck, he now recollects, against his better judgment and this was his punishment—to share with him the odium of crime. What was it Teshoo Lama used to say? Yes, yes! That's it. '*Just is the Wheel, swerving not a hair!*'"

The tenor of the telegrams in reply was to the effect that "the advices were received with regret". The Supervisor also stated that instructions had been given for shipment from Prince Albert of a new safe, and a re-supply of cash. Long might also expect two men from one of the detective agencies, and an additional clerk to help out, pending Newland's convalescence. The Prince Albert manager must have risen to the occasion and truly got a hustle on, for Long was later informed by wire that, the passenger train having left, the entire consignment would arrive on the evening freight. He met the train and welcomed the relief clerk, Prowse, with his cash bag. Here, also, he met the detectives, who had acted as a body-guard.

For many hours, work occupied them all. The removal of the new safe from the box car, and its transference to the bank was, in itself, a lengthy proceeding, and by the time it was installed in the vault, and its crippled predecessor hauled out, the time-lock did not require much winding.

Long had kept his eyes on what was going on, and when everything was ready, had seen the re-supply of cash safely into its depository. Between times, however, he had found time to thresh things out with the detectives in the presence of Tommy Smith and another mounted policeman the Corporal had called to his assistance. "It's like this," he told

the men, after giving the story step by step. "Why beat about the bush? Someone opened the vault combination and probably the back door as well. And only two of us knew the combination, James Rolston, the junior clerk, and myself."

Davis, the senior man from the agency, smiled. "And we can forget about you."

"Why?" Long demanded.

"Because, apart from other considerations, your job's worth more than the short end of nine thousand dollars. Now, I want to talk to young Rolston. But first—what do you know of him?"

"Less than I wish," Long replied. "But his references, from lumber camps in the district, were satisfactory. His work has been excellent, and, beyond a tendency to frequent the pool-room, there's not a thing against him."

"The references, I take it," Davis raised an accusing brow, "did not go back very far—to his home town and family connections, I mean?"

"Why, no—he's only a youngster. Why should I suspect a life of crime?" Long begged the question, defensively. Oh! "*Just is the Wheel, swerving not a hair!*"

"Humph! Well, let's have a chat with your precious youngster." And Long hunted up the youth himself.

"Funny business, this, Rolston," said Davis, kindly. "And you must be just as anxious to clear it up as Mr. Long, or any of us."

"Sure," said James Rolston, relieved, for he had been preparing himself for something approaching the third degree.

"You were sleeping over the bank as well as New-

lands, as I understand it," Davis questioned. " Didn't you hear anything?"

"Not a thing. I guess I was tired."

"Were you up late the night before?"

"No, about half after eleven. I had been playing pool," Rolston replied.

"Did you hear Newlands come in?"

"No. I sleep like a log."

"You must. For it woke Newlands. Great thing, sleep!" Davis knocked the ashes out of his pipe. "Well, I'm afraid you can't help us much. You may as well go and get some now."

"Some what?" Rolston asked, missing the context.

"Why—sleep," the detective replied, putting a match to his refilled pipe.

And after Rolston had left the room, Davis shook his head. "Clever young rascal, that," he said. "Of course, he took chances on being seen when opening up, but apart from that, nix come a rouse! Spent his evening at the pool room until he went to bed—volunteered his alibi like a little man. You heard him! Then, I've had a few words with Newlands. He confirms the sleep story."

"How?" Long asked.

"Our young friend's door was left half open, last night, and he was snoring good and loud when Newlands passed it. You see, he thinks of everything! for I've tried that door and it's a noisy one to open. Sort of funny coincidence, wouldn't it be, if he were innocent, not to close it last night—so Newlands says—for the first night since he's been here?"

But there the matter had to rest for the time being; for, however guilty Rolston might be, there was not a scrap of real evidence against him. As

Davis put it: "Better to let him skip around and hope he will slip up somewhere. He must be itching to feel his share of the cash between his fingers, and these birds don't trust one another any too much. And now," the detective added, cheerfully, "we must get to work."

This was no idle boast, for, whatever his ability may have been, Davis was an indefatigable worker. He had every lamp in the bank burning and went over it inch by inch. With electric flash-lights he and his assistant covered the back yard lawn and fences for possible clues, and when he was finally willing to call it a day, early risers were already about the streets.

Now, it goes almost without saying, that the robbing of the bank was an event in Gopherburg. It was one of those happy enlivening incidents in the hum-drum daily life, to be the more appreciated since it was unlooked for. As a matter of fact, its merits, as a source of excitement, were debated freely on the street as compared with such other occurrences as the Agricultural Society's Fair Day, and the occasional Circus. And the robbery won, with an easy margin. "Why! damn it," said Frankie Lewis, to a happy little group of loafers, "I've seen fat stallions, with their manes done up in coloured ribbons, since I was knee-high to a grasshopper. And, what is there to a pure-bred sow but *grunt?* As for Circuses!" Frankie threw out his arms with a gesture deprecating the "ring" and all its allurements. "Don't they touch you for a buck to go in and see their tinsel and sawdust, and then soak you another two-bits for their hold-up concert? You bet they do! But this? This is life! The real thing—and *free!* And so says

Gopherburg's Auctioneer, Real Estate and Insurance Agent, gentlemen!"

So everyone was having a good time; the towns-folk, with their something to talk about, and the paid detectives hunting for a clue. Of course, Long's real friends, Dobs and Tommy, and a few others to a lesser extent, felt for him and expressed their sympathy. But it's the old story again, of the pain under *somebody else's* pinny. Every man must bear his own burdens, or all the world would be miserable at once.

Just how Long felt, he alone knew. It seemed to him the culminating trial within a brief period—as if he had run into a streak of bad luck, and couldn't shake the jinx, do what he might. From his way of looking at things, the unhappiness which he had experienced over Peggy—fought to a finish and now behind him—was of lesser magnitude than this. That had been a personal thing—a heart wound! But this, his branch, the charge entrusted to him! It touched his honour. Oh! he knew, only too well, the gossip on the street; that he shared the vault combination with Rolston would long since have passed from mouth to mouth. He had already noted some visible effects, for Long, like any man worth his salt, had some who did not like him. These were looking down their noses, and relishing their opportunity.

"Parky" Newlands' stock, on the other hand, was at a premium. He could not have been implicated and he had dared to fight the robbers single-handed. He was a hero. And after his one day in bed, he took the street in something approaching a triumph.

So the second miserable day wore on for Long without a sign of a clue, and but gloomy prospects of finding one in spite of snooping detectives, and the two Mounted Policemen dashing around investigating this and that. The only bright spot in it was that Peggy stopped him on the street to offer him her sympathy. "I know this robbery must be worrying you dreadfully," she had said, offering him her hand, "and I'm truly, truly sorry." It was not so much the words, but that her eyes showed her feelings and he appreciated the friendliness of the action.

With Peggy on his side, believing in him and trying to help, Sybil's behaviour, so far from hurting, came dangerously near to making him laugh. It was so obviously premeditated; for she had seen him across the street, and had hastened round by the Post Office crossing to meet him face to face. And then, had *cut him dead*. "I guess Pa Thurston's been having a dig at me!" Long muttered to himself, indifferent to good-will in that particular quarter. But Jimmy Long was miles out in his guess. The robbery, and talk, had come to Sybil most providentially. She could burn her bridges now, and still save her face with herself. All that remained was a little personal spite. And she could not, would not, deny herself that!

By midnight, the zeal of the men from the detective agency was undimmed. Davis, at heart, may have been disappointed that twenty-four hours of tireless energy had produced nothing, but, if so, he did not show it. Davis was a strict believer in giving good value for money, and value, with him, meant action. Long had slipped across to the King Edward to see him in the hope that something in the way of

good news might be vouchsafed, and Davis had stated the facts bluntly. "No, Mr. Long, nothing doing yet. I've just been having a little snack before going on night shift. And I'll stay with it—you can bet your dear life on that. Clever young rascal, Rolston. Very!"

And with this wretched comfort, Long must be satisfied to pass another night.

In the rotunda of the King Edward—the tin-roofed smoke-stinking office hall, where, throughout the day, the loafers sit in arm-chairs in the windows facing onto the street, and spit—the sprawling figure of a drunken man in dirty overalls gave the final touch to his disgust. To a sordid miserable day, that sight was a fitting finale. *Man* sunk to the lowest depths! There was no mistaking the drunk, though he lay face down with his head resting against an iron cuspidor. It was Montague Fitzgerald. For a moment, Long looked at him. To reach the door, he must step over the body and, as he did so, he spoke the words aloud: "You drunken swine!" he said. For charity had gone from his heart.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AN UNEXPECTED CALLER

“**T**HERE’S a Mr. Fitzgerald asking to see you, sir,” Prowse announced. For “Parky” Newlands was enjoying a few days rest and the relief clerk was doing his duties.

“Fitzgerald!” It was on the tip of Long’s tongue to say: “Oh, tell him I’m busy.” But habit—his practice to see anyone—prevailed. “All right. Tell him to come in.”

But, if he would see him, that was as much as Fitzgerald need expect from him. A loan—drunk up all his loose change. That was probably what he wanted—though he had never asked for one before. Well! he was in no humour for drunken scavengers this morning! His lips hardened to a narrow line.

The tall man in dirty overalls took the chair across the desk from Long. It seemed scarcely credible that this was the same he had seen asprawl at midnight, with his head against a cuspidor. For Fitzgerald showed no signs of his recent debauch. Drink had killed his ambition, aged the once handsome face and, doubtless, played havoc with his constitution, but morning headaches and the visible signs of inexperienced drinking were things of the past.

The town scavenger opened the conversation. "I understand," he said "that your bank has been robbed of its money?"

Long looked his surprise. Surely Fitzgerald did not think he wished to chat about that! "Yes," he replied, bluntly. "Your information is correct. May I ask why you inquire?"

If Fitzgerald noted the tone, he ignored it. "Would your money look anything like this?" he asked, indifferently. And, feeling beneath his overalls, pitched a flat bundle of bills onto the blotter before Long.

"Good God! Mr. Fitzgerald. That's a hundred tens." Long clutched at the neat bundle in an effort to hold himself in. "What do you know about the robbery? Where did you get this?"

Fitzgerald eyed him appraisingly. He could not see that there was anything to get excited about. "One question at a time, Mr. Long. I don't know anything about the robbery."

"But this, man—*this!* Where did it come from?"

"Oh! I found that. How much did you lose?"

"Approximately nine thousand four hundred dollars."

"Then this will be it," Fitzgerald responded, and from pockets distributed in and beneath his dirty overalls he produced bundle after bundle and pitched them in turn across the desk.

And, as they came to him, Long laid them side by side, checking the tally. Yes, it was all there every scrap of it—his *honour*. He tried to cover his emotion and, in the confusion of his thoughts, blundered 'This is very handsome of you,' he said.

"I beg your pardon!" Fitzgerald replied, haughtily. "Would you expect me to *keep* it?"

"Why, no—of course not." Long tried to put himself right. "But you don't know what this means to me."

"Then," said Fitzgerald, kindly, "you are very welcome."

"When?" Long asked, indicating the bundles before him.

"About five o'clock this morning."

"May I ask where?"

"Certainly. You may know that the bank garbage can at the back gate stands on a little platform. I found it under that."

The contraction of Long's brows showed that he did not quite follow.

"Don't you understand?" the scavenger asked, a trifle testily. "I was down on one knee, stooped to swing the can onto my back, and I saw the corner of one of those bundles. I felt back, pulled it all out, and pocketed it. I thought you might be interested."

Interested! Then the significance of the find and the possibilities it offered, flashed through Long's mind. Hastily, he tumbled the money into his desk drawer. He went around, and sat on the corner close to Fitzgerald, speaking low. "You've probably figured out for yourself what your find means. They got a scare, or possibly had planned to *cache* it there beforehand—meaning to slip back for it when the excitement was over. Since then, with the police buzzing around, they haven't had a chance." He asked the question anxiously: "You haven't told anyone, Fitzgerald—have you?"

"I am not inclined to garrulosity, Mr. Long."

"Then I can depend on you to say nothing?"

"Of course. And now I must be going."

"Just a minute, Mr. Fitzgerald. To me, the recovery of the money—I'm sort of responsible, you know—means more than I can tell. I want to thank you in a personal way. And if ever I can serve you as a friend—I hope that you will let me."

Fitzgerald bowed slightly. "I shall be honoured," he said.

"But the bank's position is different," Long urged. "The sum is considerable, and they will *expect* to give a suitable reward."

The visitor rose to his feet. "I am not looking for rewards."

"Oh! that's absurd," the other replied. "They'll insist."

"Then, in *that* event——"

The words were spoken indifferently and deceived Long. "Yes?" he encouraged, hopefully.

"They should give it, Mr. Long, to some deserving case—of *charity*." And Montague Fitzgerald, Gopherburg's town scavenger, stalked proudly from the room.

* * * * *

Long shook his head, and remained for some minutes in thought. And that was the man—*God forgive him!*—he had called "a drunken swine". Then he rang the buzzer for the accountant. "The code book, Mr. Prowse, please. I'm going to wire the Supervisor."

The message delivered into Rolston's hands by Long himself for despatch at the depot read: "Chip-monk footstool matter regarded hopeless. Agency men leave evening train ochreist birchwook." The four code words of which, after translation in the Supervisor's Department an hour later, advised the

smiling executive to the following effect: "Referring to your letter, money recovered. The open message is a blind."

With Rolston's departure down the front steps, Long rushed to his room and grabbed the cash from the desk drawer. Stuffing two bundles into each hip pocket, and the balance under his jacket, he hastened into the vault and called the accountant to him. "Quick, Prowse," he ordered, "open your combination. The money's found, and it's got to go away before Rolston gets back." A short conference followed the bestowal of the cash in the safe, and since banks do not select officers of the sub-normal type to act in emergencies of this sort, a short one was all that was necessary. Said Prowse: "All right, sir. I understand."

Next, Long rounded up the detectives and Tommy Smith at his own house, and explained the situation. "So," he concluded, "we admit defeat, and you two leave on the evening train for Prince Albert. But you tumble off twenty miles west, at Poplar Ridge, and drive back. It's not good and dark now until after eleven o'clock, remember. No need to take up positions until, say, eleven thirty. I'll keep intruders away in the interim."

"What will you do?" inquired Corporal Smith.

Long laughed. "Oh! I'm going to fuss with my bed of perennials. And Blobs, the janitor, is going to cut the grass."

"Good," Smith agreed. "And the position behind the garbage can is mine. I'm sort of peeved at the way they handled Newlands."

During the afternoon, Gopherburg rang with "I told you so's" and "I knew how it would be's"; for

even in western Canada, the human trait of satisfaction in hitting the nail on the head is universally prevalent. The percentage of Gopherburgians that "had been sure the bank would not get its money back" ran high. Whilst the number of those who (apparently) "had said that fellow Davis is a dub" was scarcely flattering to the hard-working detective. Happily, however, he knew nothing whatever about it.

Blobs disliked cutting grass almost as much as milking the King Edward cow, but, as janitor for the bank, and handy man for the hotel, he had to do both. Long had once asked him whether he had learned to milk a cow in England before he came out, and had received the astonishing reply that Blobs had never seen a cow in England, which appears to require explanation.

Edward Blobs, son of William Blobs, had been born and brought up at Woolwich, and had followed, as soon as permissible, the mechanical production of big guns, working at a lathe of huge and wonderful proportions. His daily routine at "'ome" had been from the dingy, smoke-begrimed little row of cottages to the works, thence, in the evening, to the "pub" for beer in generous mug-fuls and back to the dingy row. Then, from a clear sky, had come his dismissal. The government in power had decided to economize in big gun production, and was cutting the arsenal strength to a minimum—the oldest employees to stay. Thus it came about that Edward Blobs left his sire in possession of the field.

Whether the British government did well and fairly in firing its men trained to that highly specialized work is neither here nor there, but the action of

the representative of the Canadian government who next took a hand in assisting fate is very much to the point. Deciding to seek his fortune in the fair Dominion, Edward Blobs interviewed one of those jolly fellows known as immigration officers, and this particular jolly fellow, having heard Blobs' story, and thoroughly understanding that the only thing the applicant could do was to handle a massive steel lathe and make big guns, recommended—Gopherburg. So Blobs, in his childish confidence, having expected to end his long journey midst the chimneys of a Canadian Woolwich or Pittsburg, found himself in a small agricultural town, and needs must learn to milk a cow. That was the jolly fellow's idea of handling British emigrants, and, while it may have tickled his sense of humour, it is a shade rough on the emigrant. Blobs retaliated by taking up the drinking of beer as a hobby, and, despite the fact that he thought less of Canadian lager than of the "bitter" or "mild" of his native pub, he nevertheless made of his hobby a very tolerable success.

Blobs, deprived of his birth-right—to make big guns!—and lapping beer in undue proportions, degenerated mentally, and one of the former clerks, with an aptitude for that sort of thing, had sought to immortalize him in unfeeling verse entitled "The Absent Minded Janitor". But in this story the tragedy of his life shall at least be accorded the dignity of prose.

The motive behind his instructions to cut the grass in the back yard of the bank on this particular evening was unknown to Edward Blobs, but, under the watchful eye of Long, weeding delphiniums and columbines in the bed by the fence, there was no

alternative but to push the damn thing, and look forward to his nightly supply of beer.

On a mid-summer's evening in north Saskatchewan, tennis may be played until nearly ten o'clock, and Long, guarding the back yard, worked his scuffle-hoe until he was ashamed to look the delphiniums in the face. Then he found leaves affected with yellow aphis, and zealously treated them with a contact spray of kerosene emulsion. And all the time, his thoughts were far removed from plant lice and hardy perennials.

By midnight, the town had settled down to virtuous sleep, and no one passing the bank down the street in front, or even slinking down the lane in the rear, would have suspected anything unusual. The guard lamp burned inside in its ringed wall bracket with its mockery of protection, but, since there were no windows at the back of the office, even its faint illumination had no effect upon the murkiness at the back gate. Before that hour, however, the ambuscade had been laid, the men silently slipping into their allotted places, with Corporal Smith, cramped but eager, in the place of honour behind the garbage can. True, Old Vic had heard them, but, as he was not asleep, he had contented himself with a growl, and Tommy Smith, a friend of his, had whispered his personal assurances that he was there, and that everything was all right.

One o'clock passed, one-thirty, two. Was it to be a blank night—with everything to be done over again? Two baffled detectives, one pugilistic policeman, and the personally interested Long, all sincerely hoped not.

Two-fifteen. Ah! Could they hear something at last—cautious footsteps coming up the lane? Yes!

but the men were taking every precaution—hugging the fence where the grass served to deaden the slinking progress. Now they were at the double gate, and keeping low under its protection; the latch was raised and one side opened inward. Now two men passed through and sank on their knees before the garbage can on its wooden platform.

It was the smaller who reached forward, his hulking companion holding back, with hands outstretched—expectantly. And it was at him Tommy Smith—crouched as a runner for the hundred yards dash—hurled his straight right to the jaw. As the man toppled over sideways, the policeman bounded onward, landing right on top of his second enemy, as a terrier bites and drops his rat in haste to bite again. An arm was raised and this, with its murderous automatic pistol, he pinned to the ground with his left hand. Then his own right jarred to the man's chin with an uppercut, and his second enemy bit the dust. Oh! how he had longed to soak 'em, these —, who had trussed poor Newlands up like that! and worried Jimmy half out of his life!

With the first sound of battle, the detectives and Long leapt from their "hides", but the engagement had been but a matter of seconds, and Tommy Smith was straightening his tunic, and laughing, when the others arrived.

"It's all over, boys!" said the victor. "They're out for the count—or longer. But now would be as good a time as any to attend to them." And he slipped handcuffs on the fallen foe.

Said the practical Long: "Turn a light on them, somebody. Who are they, anyway?" And Davis,

replete with the equipment of his profession, flashed on a light.

"Now there!" said Tommy Smith, "I thought I'd hit that jaw before—it sort of felt familiar."

Yes! it was our old friends, "Ugly" Mike and Paul Olynyk, desirable in the eyes of the Canadian Steamship Companies with steerage accommodation to fill, admissible to a paternal government, anxious for the success of its immigration policy, but to every decent Canadian, loving the land of his birth or adoption, the scum and offal of Europe! "Ugly" Mike and Paul Olynyk, lumber-jacks when nothing better was doing, and expert safe-blowers by profession.

The handcuffed men came out of their "sleep" and rose stupidly to their feet. Davis would have assumed command: "All right, Corporal Smith," he said, "you've got these birds, and you know where to put them."

Without taking the slightest notice of the remark, Tommy Smith addressed his prisoners. "And now," he said, "you'll be wanting to see your young friend—all tucked up in his little bed."

Long caught the cue. "He'll be expecting to see you—you know!" And he slipped ahead to open the back door of the bank.

The trap worked wonderfully. Rolston awakened out of sound sleep to see his room full of men, with the bank robbers handcuffed together.

Said Tommy Smith, laughing: "We thought you'd like to see them, Rolston. We got them, all right!"

"Ugly" Mike snarled and shook his first. "You split on us, Jimmy, you son of a —! I get you some day for this! Ya!"

"No, I didn't, Mike!" replied the wretched Rolston, bewildered. "I never said a word."

"Fine and dandy, Rolston!" said Tommy Smith. "But you might pull your pants on—because you're going to change your sleeping quarters."

CHAPTER XXIX.

ALL'S WELL

IT WAS an accident, absolutely. And it was due to the mistaken idea that the best course was to stop the car, when what Thurston should have done was either to still the engine, or to go ahead slowly in "high". This mistake was made over and over again in those days when all horses were frightened, and car drivers were inexperienced.

Jake Skelton's team had first heard the strange noise with uneasiness, and, as the Thing approached to where they could see and smell it also, the driver realized that the filly's nerves were on edge and that she needed watching. The old mare, to do her justice, did her best to contain herself—to steady the jumpiness of her offspring, and *was* doing quite creditably when Thurston made the mistake of throwing the clutch into "neutral". To the terrified horses, the worst was about to happen. The Thing had stopped! It was roaring at them! It was going to bite! They took their bits in their teeth and bolted—swerving wildly off the trail.

It was not two hundred feet past the car that the horrible thing happened, and Thurston, looking back anxiously over his shoulder, felt the blood curdle in his veins. Racing along by the fence, the off fore wheel of the buggy struck a large prairie boulder,

and Skelton was shot from his seat, face forward and limbs outstretched, into the wire.

Turning his car hastily, Thurston speeded alongside and stooped to the mutilated body. The tight-stretched barbed wire had done its evil worst. With his handkerchief, he sought to stop the spouting wrist stream, but he had neither the knowledge nor the materials there to attempt to treat the gaping wounds at neck and chest. No, the hospital with all speed was the man's only chance. Calling on the semi-conscious Skelton to make the effort, Thurston got him into the car somehow and drove as he never had before.

Luckily, the doctor was making his morning visit to his patients when the car arrived, but when he had done his best, he shook his head in response to the young matron's inquiring eyes. Shock, loss of blood and the unavoidable delay had put the man past mending. All a doctor could do was to make him comfortable, and Skelton must have realized it himself. "I want to see Corporal Smith," he directed and lay back with closed eyes.

The hospital orderly found Tommy Smith idly talking to his friend Dobs over the rectory fence, and permitting his Nellie mare to crop the rich grass growing at its base. "A man wants to see me at the hospital, you say. Who, for goodness sake?"

"It's Jake Skelton," replied the orderly, soberly. "And he's dying."

With one bound, the policeman was on Nellie's back, and then he did a thing that he had never done before: he struck her—yes, he smacked her on the rump with his open palm. If Tommy Smith had rowelled her with his spurs, or beaten her with a

whip, Nellie's feelings could not have been more hurt. She dug in her toes and raced for it. And, at the hospital, the red-coat leapt from her back into his stride up the steps without so much as making his adieu. "Sure, her master was crazy. It must be the heat!"

"Yes. I get you! Hold on a minute, Skelton, until I write it down." Then, turning to the Matron. "Quick, Miss Ash, paper and pen and ink. And please—another witness."

Corporal Smith scribbled hastily, Miss Ash and one of her nurses standing by the bedside. "There, that should do," said the policeman. "Now, listen, Skelton, while I read:—

"I, Jake Skelton, about to die, and desirous of clearing the character of an innocent man now serving sentence in Prince Albert jail, hereby declare that it was I and not William Bradley who killed my yearling and buried it on his home-
stead."

Is that correct, Skelton?"

"Yes." He clutched the proffered pen and, by sheer strength of will, succeeded in making his scrawly signature.

"Now, if you will both sign as witnesses," said Tommy Smith, breathing a sigh of relief, "and that confession will be complete."

Then he turned to the dying man again. "Tell me, Skelton," he asked, kindly, "what did you do a thing like that for?"

"His land," Jake managed.

That did not explain it satisfactorily to Tommy Smith. Skelton had ample and better land of his own. "But why, man—*why?*"

And he who had borne false witness against his neighbour sought to speak truth at last. "Thurs—" It was as far as he got. He would sin for another no more.

* * * * *

Of course, it would not have made the slightest difference if he had named Samuel Thurston as the instigator of the crime, or had even included the story of it in his written confession. What was Jake Skelton's word against Samuel Thurston's? Thurston could have shown that Skelton had reason to wish him ill, in view of his knowledge of criminal acts in the man's past life. As for his having persuaded him to commit the crime? Why, the only time he had spoken to him for months was relative to a mortgage foreclosure, and Miss Gregory, his capable stenographer, would have produced the file.

No, the wily old political jackal was crime-proof, quite apart from what his governmental friends would do for him in case of need. And no accusations on the part of Jake Skelton would have affected Sybil's chances to be referred to by the dowagers as: "That sweet Mrs. Newlands—a daughter of *Senator* Thurston, you know, my dear!" Just as she is to-day.

* * * * *

When Long received the note and read it, surprise was his first emotion, and then reflection for a suitable explanation.

It ran:—

Dear Mr. Long:—

When you recently wished to see me, you put your request in writing, and your example is my excuse.

I simply *must* visit Mr. Marsden's slough again before I leave—to-morrow noon; and I

simply *dare* not without one in attendance who fears not the guardian of the pasture. I shall be at the cross-roads east of town at four o'clock and I hope that you will be there.

PEGGY BOLTON.

P.S.—I have read the above after writing it, and in case you should not take it seriously, I feel that I should add something. It is this—*please!*

P.B.

"Now, what the devil is the girl driving at?" Long mumbled, holding the note before him, and leaning back in the swivel chair at his desk until it groaned its protest. "Unless the feminine mind is too unutterably imbecile, she *does* want to see me—but why? The bull—rot! That's flimsy to the point of absurdity, because there are sloughs here, there and everywhere, and lots of them, without collecting at that particular one. No, that won't go! Then it's not the slough, but me. She wants to tell me something. To *explain* something. Yes, that's it. She's been thinking things over, and has come to the conclusion that she gave me a sort of a raw deal. Now, with the train almost within whistling distance, she would like to square herself—to explain that my pile of chips, not stacking up to her's, I had to have my face slapped; but that, otherwise, she bears no grudge against me. Silly little goose!" He laughed delightedly. "I think I can afford to smile."

* * * * *

"Good afternoon," said Jimmy Long, raising his hat. "You picked a fine day, anyway."

"Yes, and I'm glad. It was nice of you to come. I was afraid that you might not."

"Oh dear, no!" he laughed. "I am in your debt in many ways. The least I could do was to comply with your wishes."

Said the girl, sweeping at nothingness with her net: "I am grateful, Mr. Long, just the same."

The end of June is the height of the dragonfly season, and Peggy, apparently with nothing on her mind but the beautiful gauzy-winged insects, worked industriously in collecting specimens.

As they got away from town into the more sloughy country, the species became more varied, and Peggy more and more excited. "Oh! what are *those*?" she exclaimed—just as one might ask a ridiculous question without the faintest idea of receiving an answer to it.

Long glanced at the three dragonflies, and replied casually. "Those," he said, "are *Coenagrion angulatum* and *Aeshna lineata*, both named by Doctor Walker, and a teneral of *Sympetrum scoticum*."

If he had slashed her across the face, her astonishment could not have been greater. He spoke her tongue—the language of the science of dragonflies. "You can name them, Mr. Long—without question?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Why, you must know as much as the man who wrote 'The Prairie Dragonflies'."

"Exactly as much," replied Jimmy Long. "I wrote it. I am—what did we call him that day—Oh, yes! 'The Goat'."

"Oh! oh! oh! why didn't you *tell* me?"

"And spoil all your fun? It's the solving of the difficulties, not being *told*, that's the fun of the thing."

"Yes, you're right. I know you are right," Peggy agreed. "But you might have told me. It would have helped." She was speaking to herself, it struck

Long, rather than to him. "Yes, I should have been less blind."

"If you will consider the matter, Miss Bolton," her companion replied, heartlessly, "you have not given me much chance to—have you?"

"Please, Mr. Long, *please*," Peggy pleaded. "It is to explain *that* I asked you to come out with me."

A naive admission! How surely he had sized things up! "Oh, very well!" he assented, agreeably, "This is your party. What do we do now?"

Peggy smiled into his eyes. "We go on collecting dragonflies for the present. And you help, and tell me about them."

They wandered on, collecting as they went at road-side ditches and sloughs bordering on the trail. Long could tell the girl the names of the species, their habits and give her miscellaneous information concerning not a few, that he had himself contributed to science. He would hold the delicate insects in his capable fingers while explaining, with a gentleness Peggy felt herself envying. And at times, for a few brief minutes—and then unconsciously—they knew the comradeship of their first meeting.

It is difficult to pass so small a thing as a dragonfly from the fingers of one person to those of another without the hands coming in contact. It is also probable that the heads of two people examining so minute a creature as a damselfly, held in the fingers of one, will come in close proximity to one another. And these two enthusiasts had been doing both these things before one of them, at any rate, realized the danger. "He must be careful. He had been coaxed out here by this girl, who had jumped all over him once before. If she had fooled him once it was her

fault. If she fooled him twice, it was his. But, no fear, he wasn't going to be fooled, and to-morrow she was returning from whence she came."

They had come to the corner of the Marsden estate, and here, between the trail itself and the fence, a bluff of white poplar had been left standing. On the fence side of this, in a shady nook, was an old, smooth land roller, brought west by a settler with his effects at some past date, and discarded seasons back—and with good reason—as a useless and valueless chattel.

Said Peggy, viewing the accommodating roller: "It's hot. Let us rest." She sat down on the wooden framework, and then moved along invitingly, as a woman will.

For a few minutes they sat there side by side, each occupied with thought. It was Peggy who broke the silence. "I have enjoyed our walk so much," she said, waving her net before her absent-mindedly, "and to think that the study of dragonflies appealed to you also. That's extraordinary. There are so few working them."

"That is why I took it up," Long replied. "Out west it was almost a virgin field."

"Oh, the shame of it. I have been here for three months—and I've missed the opportunity of working with you."

Long liked that. Did the girl think that she could get away with it? "I suggested collecting trips on several occasions, if I remember rightly."

"Yes, you did. I had no option but to decline."

"Of course. It's a woman's privilege to choose her own path."

"Not always, Mr. Long," Peggy corrected.

"But I'm going to leave that point for the moment; and start right at the beginning to that first day when we met out here."

Long smiled to himself. The explanation was apparently bothering her and was to be at length. "Just as you say," he assented.

"On that afternoon you saved me from danger at risk of your own life. You comforted me when I was on the point of breaking down. You were kind and good to me. You were a dear."

Long glanced at her and read distress in her face. "Please don't bother about all this," he said. "It doesn't really matter—not a bit."

Peggy shook her head. "It matter's everything. I am going to-morrow." She thought for a moment. "Do you mind answering this question frankly: Did you think, when we parted that afternoon, that I liked you?"

Long paused before replying. "Frankly—yes. But I have realized since—and with good cause—that I was wrong."

"You were *not* wrong." She put her little sunburned hand on his sleeve. "I did like you—and I do."

Nineteen men out of twenty, in Long's position, would have realized the significance of the admission; and would have snatched at an eleventh hour fulfilment of desire. Jimmy Long was the twentieth. He *had* desired her, to take her in his arms, to kiss her lips, to have her for his wife. But, for his peace of mind, he had killed love deliberately; had purged it from his heart and mind, and left its shadow behind. The victory had been mental, and, having vanquished self, it was complete, even more so than he himself

knew. His fine, logical mind was progressive, like an insect's instinct, and, short of complete confutation of all past arguments and facts, he was safe. Said he, smiling: "I am glad you do not *dislike* me, anyway."

Peggy tapped the rim of the net on the toe of her walking shoe. Yes, she had expected that. It had been a test of his worth, and he had not disappointed her. She wanted him, but she would rather fight desperately to win him back; yes, even risk losing him, than find a flaw. If he had surrendered cheaply, he could never have been quite the same again. "Mr. Long," she said, softly, "you once did me the honour of asking me to be your wife."

"And *you*—why—you would noteven listen to me."

"Forgive me that," she admitted. "I was troubled."

"I have already asked you not to bother."

"About what?"

"Why—explaining."

"Men are so confident, aren't they? and women so foolish?"

"Both have their failings," he agreed.

"Tell me, Mr. Long—and much depends on your answer—*why* would I not listen?"

"I was wrong, at first. I'll admit that. I thought it was Marsden."

"Oh, silly! He's only an overgrown boy. And then?"

"You are driving me into a corner," Long objected.

"I know it. I spent all last night worrying this out."

"There was only one alternative, *if* you liked me—we'll put it that way."

"Yes?" asked Peggy.

"Why, your money. But if you think I have any desire to be a petticoat pensioner, Miss Bolton, you are entirely mistaken." He turned to make the statement, but, when he saw the blood rush to her neck and face, he hated himself for forgetting, if only for a second, that candor is for men.

Poor Peggy. She had felt sure that a man of Long's type would have argued her behaviour out for himself. She knew that to him it must have appeared inconsistent. And, to her, the obvious explanation was, that, though she had flirted with him a little on the occasion of their first meeting, there was a man somewhere else. Her money had never occurred to her through the watches of the night. She must reconstruct what she would say. "Listen, please, Mr. Long, because you are terribly, terribly wrong. Compared in value beside what you mean to me, I would take the wretched money, every cent, right out into the middle of that slough," she waved the net in its direction, "and trample it in the mud."

"Then I don't understand," said Jimmy Long.

"That's what we are here for," Peggy replied, bravely. "That you *shall*. I met you three months ago at that slough and, when we parted company near town, I liked you better than any man I had ever known."

"You know," said Jimmy Long, "you *must* know, what I thought of you."

"And when I got home," Peggy continued, disregarding the interruption, "I told Sybil that I had met a man, and described him——"

"What of it?" Long demanded.

"And she said: 'Why that must have been Jimmy Long—we're *virtually engaged*'."

A feather would have pushed Long backwards off the roller. "Oh, the little—pussy cat!" he let her down lightly. "That did sort of put the hooks into it—didn't it?"

"Yes," said Peggy. "It took every speck of joy out of my life. I had met a man I could love and who apparently could love me, but who was *virtually engaged* to the girl I was staying with. Can you not understand my position, when you would have shown me attention the next time we met, whenever we met, and, finally, when you proposed to me?"

Said Jimmy Long, trying to straighten out the tangle in his mind: "It was a hell of a mix-up, wasn't it. What unravelled it?"

"The robbery, though I must admit that, as the weeks went by her claim upon you appeared pretty weak—"

"Yes," Long interrupted. "I don't quite see how she—"

"Then, look back and you will. When I was present, Sybil would always rush up to meet you, to take your arm, to ask you to do this and that. How many dances did you have that night—you proposed to me? Eight!"

"But I didn't take her. How did she explain that?"

"A lover's tiff. She was letting Mr. Newlands take her to make you jealous."

"Yes, you are right. She did make her story hang together. What did the robbery do?"

"It was the afternoon before the money was recovered, when you were so worried. I could stand

it no longer and reproved her for not going to you—to help you, if she might."

"Yes?" asked Jimmy Long.

"And she said: 'If he thinks he can win me, he has another guess coming. I've just cut him dead'."

"That did sort of give the show away, didn't it?"

Peggy made no reply. She had told him what she had decided it was his right to know. The ordeal was over. She waited.

And Long, sitting there, thinking, had to admit that the girl had cleared herself in his eyes. She had really had no option but to act as she had done. They had just been out of luck. It had been *explained*. He was glad. He supposed he ought to say something: "Thank you, my dear," he told her, "for clearing it up."

"You are satisfied—with that? Is your love so utterly dead, so poor a thing?" she asked.

"Do you mean," he replied, "that, money and everything, you would marry me? I thought you were only explaining."

"Oh, Jimmy, you are a dear thing—but awfully stupid at times."

It was then that the net was plucked from her fingers, and pitched fenceward indifferently, where it got hooked up on the barbed wire. Once awakened, Jimmy Long knew what he should do.

* * * * *

But they had been seen. From far across the meadow, one was coming in their direction cautiously, step by step, intent. With *his* pedigree, he should have been above spying, and, in fairness to him, it may be admitted that it was the net which attracted

him, rather than the two on the old, smooth roller.

The *snort*, when he reached the fence, and caught them in the act, was due to surprise rather than rudeness.

"It's only Rex III, dear," said Jimmy Long, glancing round. "He started it all, didn't he?" And Peggy sighed contentedly and raised her lips to his again.

CHAPTER XXX.

ALL YARNS MUST END

“DEAR PEGGY,” the letter ran, “it is now five weeks since you left and I do not know how I have possessed my soul in patience. It was cruel that you had to go just when love came to us, but, of course, it had to be—that roof was no longer possible. I leave on the noon train Friday and, once aboard, and moving towards you, the world will be mine and all that therein is. In the meantime, writing—a miserable substitute—at least keeps me occupied. But I must give you some *news* in this one, as you demand. Yes, I suppose you are right, the range of my vision is contracted; all, but one little girl, is by the way!

“Poor Bill Bradley was released immediately on the strength of Skelton’s confession, and the transformation of the family from black despair to united happiness was one of the most touching things I have ever seen. I ran him up home in my car, and I nearly wept myself—I always was a sentimental idiot, anyway. And the blue-eyed Lucy (Bill’s sister) threw her arms round my neck and kissed me. No! not to comfort me (don’t be silly), but just from joyousness.

“I see that, above, I referred to Bill as ‘poor’, but my negotiations for the sale of his coal claims are progressing famously, and I expect to close out the deal before I leave. The figure is \$150,000 cash,

and, while it may prove to be worth more—especially if it can be operated as a stripping proposition, i.e., from above—why get mixed up with coal mining? Bradley says, ‘every man to his own job’, and that ‘the cash looks good to him’. However, he insists that I take \$25,000, upon the grounds that I have made the family fortunes—and he’s as obstinate as a mule. Lucy and Tommy Smith are to have the same amount. Which fixes us all up. The interest on my share, plus my salary, will give us ample, so I won’t be ‘a p—— p——’ after all, will I? Now, don’t be cross. I’ll let you use your own money to buy me fishing tackle on my birthdays, and things like that.

“By the way, I only remembered it yesterday—you went off in such a rush. I never got you an engagement ring, did I? The best thing now, I think, is to wait and, if you are short of rings, you can select one on the afternoon we spend in Toronto. In the meantime, I have bought you a new kitchen range with a six-hole non-rust top. And it’s a dandy.

“Oh, yes! I tried to get Mr. Dobson to take a chunk of my \$25,000 for his share. He helped out, you know—or, possibly, you do not. Anyhow, he screamed with joy. He said money was no good to him, as he always gave it away, but he’d accept—No, you’d never guess it—a new ‘font’.

“Have I omitted anything? Why, of course, Tommy Smith’s love affair, which has all been wrecked these last few weeks, just like our own. Well, he saw to it (artful dodger) that he came too when I took Bill home, and Lucy, apparently, did not take long to forgive him. It was when they came in, both looking radiantly happy, that she

kissed me the second time—or, perhaps, I didn't mention that before.

"What a time we will have on our honeymoon. You will love the Georgian Bay, quite apart from getting among new dragonflies, *S. williamsoni*, *B. grafiana* and other August things of that ilk. It's pretty, and the black bass alone are worth the price of admission. We might even get a 'lunge'. I took a nine-pounder, on bass tackle, mind you, last time I was there.

"A nice *brotherly* letter this has been, so far. But I have a few strictly personal things to add before sealing him up; and the first "

But who cares for other people's love letters!

* * * * *

Once married, they did not linger in eastern cities, but journeyed through the beautiful Muskoka Lakes district and out into the Georgian Bay to an island fishing camp.

Here they spent happy days with bass and dragonflies, their Indian guide, John Monegge, rowing long miles to give them the privileges of his own secret hunting grounds. Sometimes they would take short cuts from one body of water to another through necks of lily-covered shallows. Then Long would call a halt that Peggy might delight in the life around them. Great snapping turtles with hooked beaks, orange spotted baby turtles floating lightly on lily leaves, water snakes swimming gracefully, and dragonflies darting hither and yon. And the Indian, seeing their love of nature, would fall into the spirit of the adventure. A warning hand would be raised, and a low-voiced "*we-erl!*" (something there). He had

heard a crackle, or had seen a movement, and he would point to the object on the nearby shore—a black-eyed porcupine busy on a log, a ground hog, a squirrel, whatever it might be.

Long was not a fish hog, and cared nothing if his bag of bass was well below the legal eight, but the few he took must be good ones. Everything went back under two pounds, the fish being unhooked gently with wet hands and permitted to slip back into their element. The guide did not altogether approve of this scandalous disregard of good meat, especially before lunch time, but he had fished with Long before and he knew that argument was useless. It was one morning when a near two-pounder had been released, with a sorrowful grunt from Monegge, that Long's former luck recurred.

He was trolling with an oblong pickerel spoon, and as the boat passed a lily patch some hundred yards from shore, the Indian gave warning. "Big pike there, maybe," and a few seconds later the reel "sang". Pike in shape, yes, but not to leap three feet clear of the water as did this fish. "'Lunge'—it's 'lunge,'" Monegge exclaimed, excitedly. "But," he added sadly, "you'll never get him on that line."

"We'll see about that," muttered Long. Then, as the fish leapt again. "Watch him, Peggy—isn't he a beauty!" It took twenty-five minutes to bring the 'lunge' to the gaff, but he was in the boat at last. The guide gave praise. "Good fishing—that's what you get, for letting Mr. Bass go." And they all laughed joyously together. The maskinonge—to give him his full name—weighed twelve pounds, and to get such a fish on light silk bass line was indeed "good fishing".

They would have their lunch at noon on shore at choice beauty spots selected by Monegge. He would cook and serve the meal of fried bass and bacon, and make coffee over the glowing embers. Then he would turn his back on them, and consume his own share. Long smiled to himself on these occasions as the Indian handed him the first plate of fish and bacon and the first cup of coffee, and which he, of course, promptly passed on to his wife. Peggy noticed the strange procedure, and Jimmy had to explain. "I'm sorry, dear, but squaws are not fed first where he was brought up. It's simply not done."

But, upon the whole, John Monegge was a highly intelligent Indian, and they enjoyed discussions with him on all manner of subjects touching on his folklore and language. He told them that his people were only children, and cited the instance of one group of tribes appealing to the government for permission to fight another. "Why did they *want* to fight them?" Peggy asked. "That's what the government wanted to know," Monegge replied. "And they said, because they thought they could beat them."

His opinion of Longfellow's Indian in "Hiawatha", in response to Jimmy's queries, was disconcerting.

" '*Took her hand as brown and withered, . . .
Called her sweetheart, Nenemoosha!*' "

He quoted.

"She might be!" John admitted, smiling. "But in my tongue (Ojibway), nenemoosha means your wife's sister."

So Peggy blushed, and Jimmy tried again:—

" '*To the Islands of the Blessed,
To the Kingdom of Ponemah,
To the land of the Hereafter!*' "

"But it's not Ponemah," Monegge corrected, "it's *Ponemah*. What's more, it doesn't mean the hereafter—heaven. It's more like 'wait a bit'."

He explained the nice distinction between "ne-be", pure drinking water, and "wa-boo", water made into something. But the word "we-er" was the greatest enigma to Jimmy and his wife. Sometimes it was "we-er" (something there!), and again, "cow-ene we-er she-gun" he would say, after searching the watery depths, his head well over the gunwale (no bass!) "We-er", then, the existence of something, either *there*, or the negative, *not* there.

A girl, daughter doubtless of a shanty man, came down to a rocky shore for a pail of water. "Look," said the Indian, pointing, "I call her 'Lorna Doone'."

"Why?" asked Jimmy, surprised.

"Oh, because—haven't you read the book?"

He could speak English and French and a dozen Indian dialects. He could play, thanks to Christian Island instruction, every instrument in a brass band. And he died some two years later of tuberculosis in a Toronto hospital, as the price of his education.

* * * * *

From their fishing camp, they took boat to Pene-tanguishene and a train thence to Meaford West. Here, to connect with the boat to Fort William, they must charter a rig and driver, and cover many miles through the peaceful night. The vehicle was a double seated buggy, and the driver, a sometime buyer of apples, told of his purchase that day of a thousand barrels at a dollar per.

Long, in the back seat, with his arm around Peggy, encouraged with a "yes" or "no" at suitable intervals,

much as *Ann* in "Man and Superman", and with equal indifference, told Tanner to "go on talking".

At Winnipeg, with their long journey north-west before them, Jimmy found seats on the back platform of the observation car, and the train was moving slowly out before "Cap" Marsden, late but enthusiastic, appeared upon the scene. Spying them, he raced joyously along the track, possessed by a consuming desire to *do something*. But what? Ah! the handle of the rear-end whistle! He reached for it, and turned it on. And was left, panting, but happy, a waving figure in the middle distance.

Via Portage and Dauphin, they travelled through fields of wheat, oats, barley and flax, now ripening to harvest, and Long, wise in agriculture, would read to his wife the book spread wide before their eyes. "Now look, Peggy, at that wheat. It should go thirty-five bushels or better, and it's even and clean. If he didn't plow that summer fallow three times, I'll eat my hat."

Or, again, "There's a poor farmer. See the patchy spots and weeds. Look at them, everything noxious; tumble-weed, mustard and Canada thistle. I can't *see* stink-weed from here, but I'll bet that outside I could *smell* it."

And Peggy would laugh, thoroughly enjoying the sport.

"Note the Scandinavian!" Long directed, pointing.

"But there's nothing there—" Peggy objected, "only a gate with a funny top bar."

"It's peeled white poplar. And the cantilever top, that's *him!*—as they said in the Jackdaw of Rheims. It's pure Swede."

"Oh! that calf—did you see it?" Peggy exclaimed, excitedly. "It jumped head first into a water barrel."

"I know. They go absolutely crazy. And there's no scientific explanation—because they can't sting or bite."

"What can't sting or bite, Jimmy? You're as enigmatical as the calf."

"Why, the bot flies, of course. What else would make them crazy? I've seen a yoke of oxen get so scared that they couldn't be held. Yes, they bolted, heavy breaking-plow and all, away out into a deep slough, and there they stayed until evening."

At Dauphin, next morning, the observation car was taken off and, for twelve hours, they must make the best of the conveniences of a day coach. But Peggy never murmured, no, not even at noon hour when the train stopped at a jerk-water siding, and a fat woman in a filthy apron rang a bell before her eating house door, bidding the hungry to the fly-infested board.

"We're in an unsettled bush country here," her husband explained, "and everything's pretty crude."

"You're forgetting, Jimmy, I've been through it before, and I was all alone last time. This is distinctly better." And she hugged his arm to her side.

"That's the spirit, dear. Everything must be taken as one finds it. The prairie country's huge, and unmanageable with the man-force available at present. But it's wonderful in its resources in timber and minerals, and its almost limitless productiveness in food. In a sense, *that's* going to be its undoing for a time—over-production, and there will be lean cycles of years now and then, just as there have been in the past. But there is one thing that grows un-

ceasingly—the population of the world. The time will come, Peggy dear, I can't place it—no man can—when the world's great problem will be *food*. The prairie provinces will then be a hive of industry struggling to feed hungry humanity by every last device of intensive farming. Prior to that time will come a long period of prosperity, and subsequent to that time will come—”

“What, Jimmy?”

“*Famine!*—and, unless God wills otherwise—the inevitable end.”

Peggy was thoughtful for a minute or two. “Yes, Jimmy. It will be long after we are gone, but I think I follow. It's awful, too, to think about, that day, when the world cannot feed its people.”

“So we must proceed sanely, if we can, farming, rather than robbing the land under cultivation, and saving the virgin acreage against the future. Look at it, dear, the ultimate hope of a hungry world, the ripening grain rippling with the breeze. Oh, Peggy, you must feel as I do, the promise and beauty of such a heritage?”

“A *happy* land, too! Jimmy, I think,” she slipped her hand into his, “to share with me your own most wonderful love.”

* * * * *

The westbound whistled at the crossing, and swung round the bend into Gopherburg with clangling bell and grinding brakes. And there were smiling faces and outstretched hands to welcome them and to show good-will, for they had come to live their lives with these who had gathered to meet them. They were home.

A pleasant surprise awaited them at the house, explaining Dobs' whispered advice to Long at the depot to "look in the oven". The table was set, all ready for a meal, with a great bowl of flowers in the centre. "Oh! Jimmy," Peggy exclaimed delightedly, "I believe dinner is all ready for us." And a visit to the kitchen proved this to be correct. Roast chicken, green peas and new potatoes there were piping hot, and ready for the table, with salad and Charlotte Russe to follow, set out upon the kitchen cabinet.

It had been an inspiration on the part of Dobs, and he had hastened with it to Mrs. Bridget. "They'll be tired and hungry as hunters, and they will love you the rest of their lives. I'd do it myself, honest, I would, only—" he added, ruefully, "—I can't *cook*."

"Sure, I'll do it," Mrs. Bridget had consented, laughing. "She's a dear, and he's——"

"Say it! No one's listening but me—and I don't count. He's a dear, too."

As a matter of fact, Mrs. Bridget barely made her escape, for the homecomers were actually coming through the front door as she—still wearing her apron—closed the back door behind her. And of *such* is the Kingdom of Heaven.

* * * * *

The following afternoon, Peggy must needs go shopping, and Jimmy, proud, but amused, must needs go with her. She bought—much to his delight—a curb-chain pot cleaner, which he believed Cole Benson had palmed upon her ignorance, and which, incidentally, has done yeoman service ever since. But at the grocery counter she earned the respect, not

only of her husband, but of the grocery clerk; she bought pepper by the *ounce*, and not by the pound, as a bride is supposed to do.

Opposite the King Edward, they witnessed one of those tragedies which occur in every town, in every country, on every day of the year. Little Betty Passman, a tiny mite of four years old, skipping joyfully down the sidewalk, stubbed her toe and went a-sprawling. She rose, looking around for comfort, and howled. Peggy sprang forward to the rescue, but a tall man in dirty overalls, leaning against the signpost, disengaged himself and was there before her.

"What's the matter, little maiden?" he asked, with a concern worthy of the occasion.

"I falled down," Betty replied tearfully. "And," she pointed to a dimpled knee, "I hurted myself there."

"But *that*," said Fitzgerald, dropping to one knee, and smiling into her eyes, "was a *long time ago*."

THE END

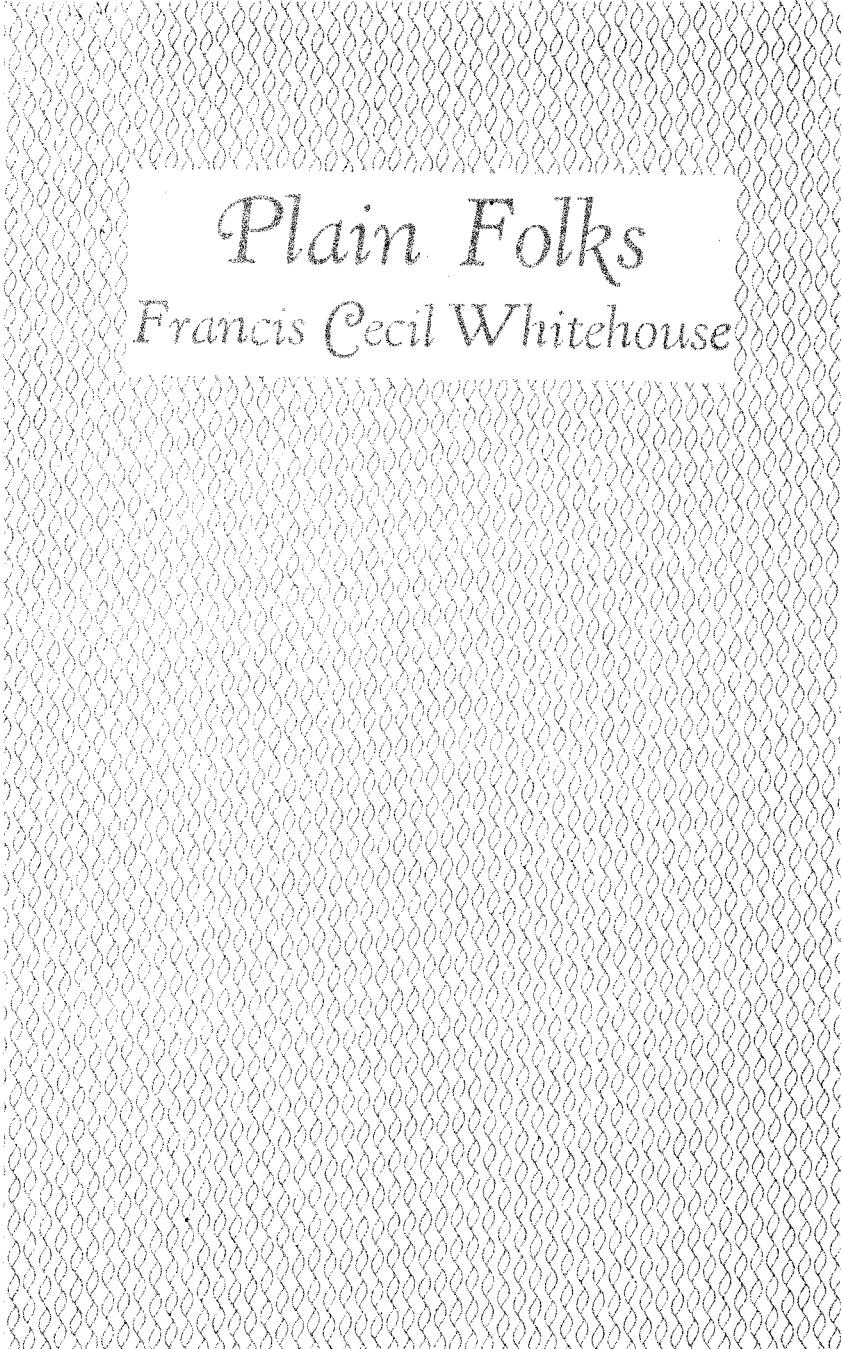
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